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THE NEW ANTIGONE

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THE NEW ANTIGONE

A Romance

Προβᾶσ' ἐπ' ἔσχατον θράσους
ὑψηλὸν ἐς Δίκας βάθρον
προσέπεσες, ὦ τέκνον, πολύ·
πατρῷον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἄθλον.

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PART II

Continued

CHAPTER XXI

THE ORDINANCES OF THE GODS

THERE was silence in the room. They could neither of them speak or move in the flood of happiness which came over them. Hippolyta was the first to release herself, and go back to her former attitude by the fire. She waited for him to take up the conversation.

'Then,' said Rupert with a pleasant laugh, sinking back into the chair by the easel, 'I must get a special license as early as I can—to-morrow morning, if possible.'

Hippolyta gave him a curious smiling look. 'Who grants you the special license?' she asked.

'I don't know, I am sure,' he answered. 'I am not learned in these things. I fancy it is the Archbishop of Canterbury.'

'Do you believe in the Archbishop of Canterbury?' she inquired, still smiling. He, too, smiled at the question on her lips at such a time.

'Not a great deal,' he said; 'but he is an institution, a piece of antiquity. And we cannot be married without him.'

'Can we not?' she said. 'What a strange thing that would be! No, Rupert, we do not want the Archbishop's license, or anyone else's.' The words sounded strangely on her lover's ear.

'You are excited, Hippolyta,' he said, 'and it makes

you talk in a fanciful way. I care nothing for the license. We can be married by banns, in the old fashion, if you like; but it will take more time, and you will have to be called by Mr. Truscombe in Trelingham Church.'

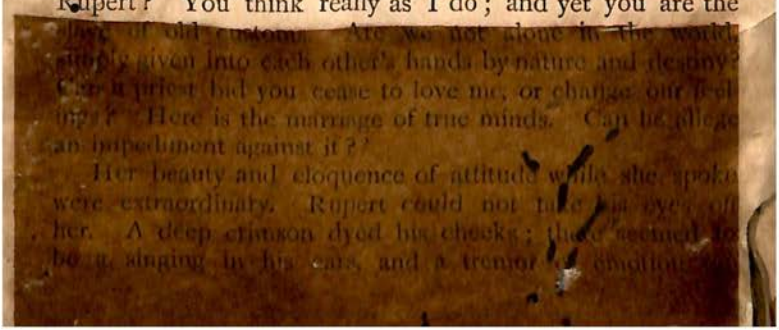
'Not in any church,' was her firm reply. 'Listen, Rupert, I see you do not understand me yet. I love you with my whole heart, but I have not ceased to be Hippolyta Valence. Do you know how I have been brought up? I am not a Christian; I have no religion, except to follow my conscience; to live the highest life and help towards realising the noblest ideas. My father has taught me that all religions debase them. And do you imagine it would become my father's daughter, at the very moment he is staking his life in the battle for the future, to stand at a Christian altar and submit to institutions which he and I have renounced? I will never do such a thing.'

'But my dear, dear Hippolyta,' he cried in amazement, 'it is only a ceremony. It can do you no harm.'

'Yes, it can do me this harm—that I shall be acting a falsehood. I have neither regard for the Christian ceremonies nor belief in the creed they express.'

'But surely you believe in the sacredness of wedlock.'

'I believe in the sacredness of love, but I will have no priest to utter his superstitious formulas over my head, or recite legends to which I must hearken while despising them, or pretend that you and I may not consecrate our hearts to one another without his leave. Nor will I submit to any civil ordinance. To bind myself before man would be more foolish even than to take an oath in the presence of a God I do not believe in. Why should you care, Rupert? You think really as I do; and yet you are the



through him which all his efforts were powerless to control. He felt himself choking. What, what demon, at once persuasive and malignant, had thrust Hippolyta into this frightful danger? How, good heavens, had she been so foolish, so innocent, as to confide herself, at such a time, under such circumstances, to a man who was passionately in love with her, casting away like an unsuspecting child the protection with which society girds about maiden honour? 'Oh,' he murmured, sighing heavily and turning away his eyes with a violent effort, while he set his teeth and grasped the arm of the chair into which he had flung himself, 'oh, to pluck this rose, this sweet, pale rose, breathing out love and passion! Oh, pale, sweet rose, to be trampled in the mire, its leaves rent, its fragrance gone, and I to be such a villain!' He would not look into those kindling eyes again. But the fire in his heart, how it surged, how it ran through his veins! It was the hot lava fire of temptation. No, no, he must not yield. 'How did you dare to come, you mad, impulsive child?' he cried, still choked with emotion.

'Dare to come?' was her quiet answer. 'Dare, Rupert? Not come to you because I dare not? Why, what risk am I running? Rupert will not harm me.' Her voice was low and clear; it never trembled.

'Not Rupert,' he said huskily, putting down his rebellious spirit with a firm hand; 'not Rupert, but the wildness in him, the passion you have so cruelly, so thoughtlessly——' He would not continue. Better not dwell on it. One moment of weakness and they were lost. He must be calm, find arguments against his own tumultuous feelings, against her innocent but most fatal delusion. But what reasoning could avail? She did not comprehend what she had been saying, what her principles meant, into what a net she had cast herself. To her the world was utterly unknown. He could not reason as with one who would understand his half-words. Could he urge the example of society? She would laugh it to scorn. Custom, usage, respectability, how was he to make them avail where education had taken their value from them? There was no argument there. At last he exclaimed:

'But, Hippolyta, for my sake, darling; to please me, will you not do like the rest of the world? You shall be free as air afterwards. I have never given a thought to your religious views. You learnt them from your father, and it is not for me to say I know more about such things than he does. I was brought up in the ordinary way; I took my own line when I became a man, as you know. My friends would tell you, very likely, that I had not much of the Christian left in me, nor do I suppose I have. But some points we must observe till the world changes.'

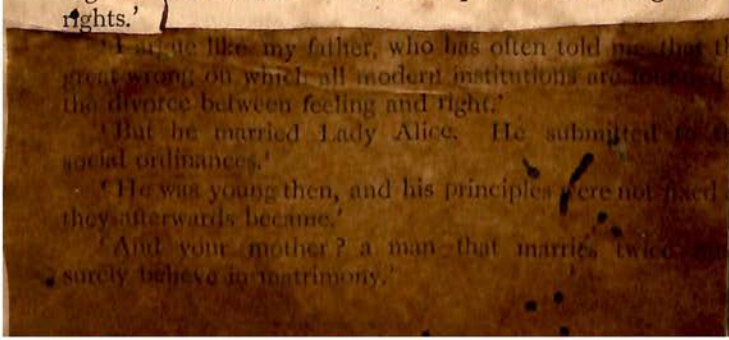
'My world has changed already,' was her rejoinder; 'it has ceased to be the world of lying conventions and foolish worn-out antiquities. It is the world of truth and honour and love. If I could not promise to be faithful, if I were not sure of my own heart and of yours——'

'How can you be sure if we are not married, Hippolyta?' His voice trembled again. He could hardly continue. 'Might I not do as other men have done—be a scoundrel and desert the woman I had pretended to love? Where would be her remedy?'

He shook with excitement and the effort to keep it down.

Hippolyta fairly laughed. 'And do you think the Archbishop's license would give her a remedy? What a charm for broken hearts! Why, it would be a more powerful love-philter than Tristram and Iseult drank together on their fatal voyage.' A slight pang of jealousy shot through her; she could not forget the tableau in which Rupert and Lady May pledged their love on the evening of the ball.

'My dear child,' said Rupert, in his exasperation, 'you argue like a woman. It is not a question of feelings but of rights.'



'I cannot tell,' said Hippolyta, musing, but not, as it would seem, convinced. 'There was in the union of my father and mother all the sacredness which you, and I no less than you, prize in wedlock. But whether they went through civil or religious forms I never learnt. I do not think they did.'

Rupert, in spite of his large-mindedness, felt the shock. 'And is it possible, then, that your mother was not married?' he exclaimed, with growing indignation against Colonel Valence.

'Quite possible,' she answered in a tranquil voice; 'not married as men speak who cling to the conventional. But she loved my father, and had no eyes for any one but him till the day she died.'

'I see, I feel,' he said, being utterly baffled, 'what an influence education has had on you. I am at a loss what to say. You are in the wrong; you do injustice to that highest nature you hold in veneration; and still, these principles are so novel I do not know how to cope with them. Oh,' he cried, in a tone of vehement desire, 'I wish Ivor Mardol were here. You could not resist him.'

'I do not believe he would take your side,' she answered; 'the side, I mean, which you are in vain attempting to defend. He is no disbeliever in the golden age.'

'Am I, then?' asked Rupert.

'It would seem so. You cannot imagine that two hearts, the most attachable that ever were, will be true to one another unless society—and such society!—clamps them together with iron bands. Ivor Mardol would rebuke your want of faith, not my trust in you. Come, Rupert, dear,' she went on, facing him now with her sweet and frank expression, 'let the soul of the artist within you burst these conventions, and float with me into a happier air. The old world is dying; it is nearly dead. Cannot you hear the rattle in its throat; these inarticulate gaspings of rites and ceremonies, the meaning of which was emptied away before you and I saw the light? We are young; we have learnt how much of what people say they believe, and only say it, to false to the heart's core. What concern have we with effete aristocracies, obsolete religions, childish betrothals

with ring and book in the sight of the profane multitude? The infinite expanse of the future lies before us, the possibilities of to-morrow. It has taken many a brave life to win this fair inheritance—the poets, the dreamers, the wise men and women who have not dreamt merely, but have begun to realise what they dreamt. On which side will you take your stand,—with the old, tyrannical, foolish, helplessly cruel past, or with men like Ivor Mardol and Colonel Valence, with women like—yes, I dare to say it—like Hippolyta? You do not know the consequences of one false step in a girl brought up as I have been to act and speak the perfect truth. Were I to do as you bid me, to go with you before priest or registrar, I should degrade myself beyond redemption. This, Rupert, is the woman's protest against the old bad order, her martyrdom if you will. It is for man to renounce honours, wealth, glory, the power which involves dominion over the weak, and is founded on their weakness. What can a maiden renounce? I will tell you. Do not shrink if I say it, conscious of the unsullied life I have led and the innocent love that is beating in my heart. Rupert, she can renounce respectability.'

He had listened like one amazed. She spoke with burning eloquence, and her eyes were bright and clear as she stood before him, her countenance glowing with enthusiasm, while with the fervent words her bosom heaved and fell. Rupert, in a taking of love and anger, was almost beside himself.

'Good heavens, Hippolyta,' he burst out, 'do you want to drive me distracted? Was ever such a situation? You do not in the least understand your danger or mine. Child, child,' he said, his face darkening, 'why have you dared to put yourself thus in the power of another, even though that other be Rupert? I will not harm you. God forbid. But see to it that you tempt me no further. Go, my dear, forget these wild and hurtling words. Let me take you to your hotel.' He looked round as he spoke for his hat and overcoat.

She laughed, no whit displeased. 'You must find my hotel first,' she said. 'I have no hotel.'

'Where is your luggage then?' he inquired.

'I brought hardly any,' she replied; 'what there is I left at the railway station. I came here direct.'

'Well, well,' he said uneasily, 'there is no harm done; we can call for it, and then drive you to some hotel.'

She did not stir from her place. With a long, earnest look she examined the expression of Rupert's countenance, where he stood by the door. He was impatient; he could think only that she ought to have an address in London and not be wandering about like this. He would devise some means of persuading her to be reasonable to-morrow, when she had got over the excitement of the discussion. While he was in this mental confusion, she walked slowly across the hearth and came to him. He turned round. They were again face to face.

'Rupert,' she said, 'I am here. I am your wife. We have acknowledged our mutual love, which has no rival nor can have a successor. Take me as I am. I love you. I do not fear you at all.' She looked marvellously beautiful as she stood before him waiting.

'I will not,' he cried, 'so help me God. I am willing, nay, eager as love can make me, to marry you. But, Hippolyta, have pity on yourself, have pity on me,' he said in an imploring voice; 'see, I go down on my knees to you,' and he fell sobbing at her feet. She stooped and touched his cheek with her ungloved hand.

'No, Rupert,' she answered, weeping; 'I have my code of honour as you have yours. We will be married my way or no way. You must choose.'

'Then,' he said, rising with a groan that tore his heart, 'it shall be no way. I cannot, I will not dishonour you.' He did not dare to lift his eyes to her face.

'It is all over then,' she said in a faint whisper. 'Good-bye, Rupert. I have staked and lost. No matter, no matter. Let me go.'

'Go where?' he said, detaining her. 'You shall not walk alone at this time of night through the London streets. I will accompany you as I proposed.'

Her look had a strange meaning in it. 'Let me go,' she murmured; 'I am not afraid of the streets. I know my way.'

'But you said you had no hotel.' He was resolved to go with her.

'I shall not need an hotel,' was the answer she made. She drew her cloak about her shoulders and attempted to pass him. Rupert had drawn the curtain aside which hung over the door, but he held the handle fast.

'What are you going to do?' he said.

'Do you imagine,' she replied, 'that I have spent all my resources in asking you to accept my love? When I left Falside I had reckoned with the contingencies of our situation. I knew what I was risking. My reputation—as you call it,—has not a visit like this, under these circumstances, blown it to the four winds?'

'Who saw you come in?' he said eagerly. He felt the force of her words.

'Your servant and her children,' she said. 'I gave no name, but my veil was up. They will be able to describe me.'

'I can trust old Martha,' he answered, 'if there was nobody else.'

'But you cannot trust me,' replied Hippolyta. 'I have put myself into your hands, and my character is dead. I have killed the Miss Valence who was, or might have been, a respectable member of society. Can I be the same to you as if this had not taken place?'

He thought she was relenting. 'You can, you can,' he exclaimed with a feeling of relief. 'It matters nothing what you have said or done to-night. Let us forget it, darling; forget it, my own worshipped Hippolyta.'

'You mistake me still,' she said. 'I am not come to act a play. What I have done is a part of myself. If you take me with it you renounce the social ordinances which, instead of uniting, have almost separated us. But if you do not——' There was a long pause, or else the minutes stretched out in this spiritual agony.

'And if I do not?' Rupert said slowly, as if coming to himself out of a sleep.

'In that case, to-night will be the last of Hippolyta Valence,' she answered.

'Do you mean that you will——?' He could not finish the sentence.

'I mean,' she said under her breath, 'that I know my way to the river. I will go whither so many of my poor sisters have gone before me; and neither you nor any man shall hinder it.' And again she endeavoured to pass him.

'Stand back,' he cried out; 'you shall not go. You have lost your senses.' And even as he spoke the thought of uttering such harsh language to the woman he loved smote upon him. 'Dear, sweet Hippolyta,' he said, taking her hand, 'forgive me. It is I that am mad. But do not be angry. Give up these wild thoughts. Be persuaded. I will do anything.'

'Anything but what I ask,' she said. 'Oh, I do not mind your hard words. But enough. We have seen the last of each other. We must go our several ways.' She was calm and resolute. Her eyes had gathered a brilliant light in them during the moments of their altercation; and Rupert, as he looked at her, thought she was the woman to do as she had said. If he let her go the river would be her resting-place ere morning.

Then began a fresh scene of earnest, impassioned pleading on his part and resistance on hers. He begged, he entreated, he grew angry and gentle by turns, he employed the most caressing language and all the resources of the lover's art, not as many a lover has done, to overcome the scruples of modesty, but to save this high and noble spirit, noble in its very aberrations, from shipwreck. He might as well have poured out his eloquence to the stones of the street. Hippolyta heard it all unmoved. She said once, 'I do not scorn you for trying to change me, but I should scorn myself if I yielded. Tell me that you cannot love me unless I submit to this mockery and I shall understand. But, even then, I will not give in to you. Can you tell me so?'

'No, Hippolyta,' he answered, 'it would not be true. This is no question of love. Whatever you become I shall feel the same towards you that I did when you dawned upon me like a heavenly apparition in the Hermitage.'

'If our love remains,' she said, 'what can the rest signify?' and the contest broke out again. But it was not equal. Hippolyta, as she truly said, had thought over the

contingencies of that strange situation, and was prepared for the worst. Her life, spent with those who were ever exposing themselves in the field or ready to mount the scaffold, had familiarised her with the idea not only of self-sacrifice, but of failure which has death for its price. The risk, she said, must have been undertaken some day, why not now? To persuade Rupert in cold blood, or by the use of arguments, was, she knew, impossible. One weapon which not even he could pluck from her hand, one last resource there was which left the man and woman unequally matched—and the man inferior. She told him plainly. 'Do not be a tyrant,' she said, 'and compel me to die. But this be sure of, only by yielding to my wish can you persuade me to live. Make the trial. Open the door and let me go, or quit me and do not return. In twenty-four hours you will hear news of me.'

What could avail against such resolution? Rupert said to her at last, 'Will you stay here and do yourself no harm to-night, if I leave you? Give me time to reflect. You may have changed your mind in the morning.'

'I shall not change my mind,' she said. 'But I will stay here on these conditions. Promise me to come back as early as you can to-morrow and to look upon me henceforth as your wife. Promise, Rupert, and I will wait quietly. But if you do not return, or still insist on what I cannot yield,—you know the rest. My dear,' she said softly, 'you have to deal with a loving woman. Trust me and let us be happy together. Do you promise?'

'I promise,' he answered in a low voice.

It was like consenting to death. The room swam before him. But when Hippolyta heard the words her countenance lightened wonderfully. She became a naïve child instead of the resolute woman that had been pleading in that desperate and unparalleled cause. 'Now go,' she said, offering him her cheek to kiss. He touched it with his lips, almost shudderingly. She held the door open. He bethought himself for a moment before going, and said, 'You will find the means of making a fire in the morning, and getting a morsel to eat. Lock the door. Don't answer any one till I come. I will look in at the lodge as

I go past and tell Martha she need not trouble about the place; that I have left it safe, and do not want it disturbed at present. You must not be surprised, Hippolyta, if I am delayed till towards noon. There will be many things to see to. And—and you will not do anything while I am away?'

'Keep your word,' she answered, 'and I will keep mine.'

He fled down the steps and along the garden-path. He heard the key turn in the lock. He did not venture even to glance back, but ran straight on, gave a quick, brief message to the woman who came out as he passed, and with head down and rapid step took the road towards London. More agitated he could not have been had he left a murdered body in his studio. It was worse, he said to himself; he had murdered a soul. 'And yet not I, not I,' he murmured repeatedly, 'it is her father that has ruined her with his principles.'

He walked on and on. The winds were still up, driving the clouds through a beautiful stormy sky in which the moon shone bright at intervals. It had ceased raining and the streets were dry underfoot for the most part, though here and there a pool of water gleamed on the roadway, and all the scene reminded one of a chill March night rather than the end of May. There was a high-strung feeling in the atmosphere which harmonised with Rupert's excited mood, and gave him a vivid sense as though in comparison he had never lived till now. What had he promised? Was there any retreat from it compatible with honour, nay, with the existence of Hippolyta? And this, then, was the realising of all his hopes! Oh, bitter mockery! He went over the debate again and again. Why had he not urged this, why forgotten that? He had been too tame, too yielding; he might have pleaded more earnestly for himself. Hippolyta was generous, and if he had insisted on the injury to his own sense of rectitude, to his reputation, which had never endured a stain, to his happiness, which must be sacrificed if they were to live in concealment or come forth with shameless foreheads before the world,—but what did it avail? The hour was past and

his word given. To-morrow? It wanted how few moments of the day when he and Hippolyta should become outcasts from the world in which he had been brought up? And he was helpless, bound hand and foot by the devilish teaching of Colonel Valence. Who would have believed yesterday that the dreams of a revolutionist were henceforth to shape his life for Rupert Glanville? He had been content to dwell in the regions of the ideal; to put aside these questions, tossed to and fro by politicians and reformers, as vulgar, unworthy of the artist's consideration, fit only for debating clubs. And they had broken into his retreat and were clustering about his hearthstone. On him—him—Rupert Glanville, the crisis of the modern world had fallen.

'Why should it not?' he said with a bitter laugh as he hurried along. 'Am I so unlike the rest of men? Valence was right. The world is a universal shipwreck, and my turn has come to be thrown out on the waters. Every one must cling to his own spar. But how strangely, good God, how strangely it has come about! Hippolyta, so young, so innocent, incapable of hurting the tenderest thing,—all feeling, purity, and affection,—must Hippolyta be lost, and I be the instrument of her undoing? It is too much.'

He stopped and gazed up and down the silent road, bewildered to such a degree that he knew not whether to turn back and try to persuade Hippolyta, or to leave it all to chance and depart by the next mail for the Continent. He could be ready in a few hours. He was now nearing home, and terribly fatigued with the excitement and exhaustion of the day, for he had eaten nothing since noon. To pack a portmanteau, write a farewell note, telling Hippolyta that a bad promise ought to be broken and he could not bring himself to do her wrong, then to drive to Charing Cross and catch the Dover tram,—all this was still possible. He had almost resolved on it, but for the memory of her resolute pale face and her steady words, which assured him that she had not been acting a part. What should he feel if she carried her threat into execution, and he learned in Florence or Dresden that her body had been found defiled in the mud of the Thames, her sweet eyes closed for ever?

'No, he dared not risk it. Even death would not save her now; after spending a night in that fatal studio she was to the world at large dishonoured. She had spoken the truth; in paying such a visit her character was blown to the four winds. The falling snow was not more stainless, and yet she must bear about with her the penalty of guilt.

His thoughts, as he wandered aimlessly under the fitful moon and the wild clouds, took a fresh turn. He would not go home yet. He stood looking through the railings of the Park, and studied with an absorbed gaze the misty lawns on which lay a film of uncertain moonlight, while the dark stems of the trees made a solemn background. 'After all,' so his meditation ran, 'who knows? Hippolyta may be right. What is the world's marriage but a ceremony? How many of us believe in it or respect it? Should I have let it stand in the way if I had fallen in love with a married woman and discovered that she was miserable? Fortunate for me, I daresay, that I never did. Things are all breaking up; it seems as if the lease of the old world had run out and the building had to come down. Certainly it is years since I entered a church with any belief in what goes on there. Have I any reason to become its champion? None, none whatever, except a feeble dislike to be pointed at as eccentric or a libertine. God knows I am no saint, but neither am I a libertine. How could I consent to the ruin of an innocent child? But she says it is not ruin. It will be a marriage of the heart, and why should I mind? If we were on a desert island, where there was neither clergyman nor registrar, should we hesitate to marry or think ourselves not married till one came? What is the difference then? For to me the social order is of no more consequence than a panorama which I see pass by, one view drawing after it another, and none of them lasting. I cannot answer Hippolyta's objections. Oh, why did Ivor go away? He would tell me what to do; he would find a solution. Is it only inbred custom that revolts in me, or something higher and better; is it the heart which will not have its affection degraded, or a want of nobility in the intellect, fettered by chains of use? I cannot tell. Who is there that can tell me?' He lost

himself in the endless discussion. The sound of a distant cab hurrying along broke from time to time upon his ear; but it died away into silence while he walked hither and thither, scanning the shapes and motions of the silvery clouds and the deep rifts of blue where the stars shone faintly. Was Hippolyta asleep at this hour, or pacing the studio in troubled thought as he was pacing up and down Park Lane? Again he felt tempted to go back.

He walked a few steps in the direction he had come; then, with a strong effort, frightened and feeling a chill at his heart, like one who has heard the voice of an evil being near him, he turned again and went hastily along the deserted streets, not towards his studio, but towards the river. He could not have explained what lugubrious fancy it was that led him on, neither pausing nor looking back, nor assigning to himself a reason for the way he was travelling, but still moving, as by instinct, always towards the river. In the weird and silent light, shed by a moon which gradually drank up the clouds and seemed to grow larger and larger, he caught a glimpse of his shadow, now in advance, now moving sideways with him, now emerging from the deep gloom of enormous buildings as a drowning man rises for a moment from the waves which are to close over him again. He passed a solitary figure at the turn of a street, and could hardly refrain from asking it what business took it abroad at such an hour. He heard the steady march of a policeman pacing up and down, and the echo from the opposite side of the way, with something of the guilty apprehension that dogs an ill deed; he would have felt easier had no one in the huge city been awake but himself. And still he made for the river. A fresh breeze blew upon his forehead when he emerged from a narrow lane; he saw the vast shadow of the Abbey, and the moon resting over it; other shadows came, as it were to meet him and guide him on. In the quiet which had succeeded to the rush and tumult of a London day there was something inexpressibly awful and mysterious; something as terrible as death, for it came upon him like the cessation of innumerable lives, of myriad activities, like the lying down to a rest which might never be broken, so profound was the silence over it, of millions

upon millions. And then he was standing alone on Westminster Bridge.

For that brief space of time, the river with its multiplied solemn lights stretching far away, the immense radiance of the moon quenching them in one place, contrasting with them in another, all that flood of dreary waters and still drearier memories belonged to him alone. It had no name, no associations with history, no taint of the vulgar day; it was a broad river flowing by a great wicked city down to the unknown sea. And in its deeps were the secrets of wasted lives, a vision of horror not to be explored by the boldest. Yet he would force himself to think of those whom Hippolyta, the pure unsullied Hippolyta, had called her sisters, and with whom she had been willing to make her bed that night. Where he was standing, in another hour, let him but utter the word, she would be gazing her last on earth and sky. He saw her mounting the parapet, heard her cry of despair as the arches of the bridge echoed and re-echoed it in the stillness, watched her as she sprang, as she whirled through the air, as her body struck upon the rushing waters, and her golden hair floated in the light one instant, then was swallowed down into the deeps of death. Another of the pitiful sisterhood to whom suicide opens its ghastly arms, another folded in the embrace of the spectre that knows not how to help sorrow but by slaying! And was that to be Hippolyta's doom? 'Not now,' he said aloud, 'not to-night, unless I lose pity for the sake of I know not what poor forms and conventional virtues. It shall not be to-night.' He looked steadfastly down at the river, and from a great distance the whisper was conveyed to his heart, 'Not to-night, do you say? But another night may come, more desolate than this; a night when Hippolyta, degraded, ruined, forsaken, the cruel sport of passion and poverty, shall find her way hither, and looking round for one that loved her in the old time and is not near nor will come again, crying out to the silence to have pity on her, shall find no refuge but in these deeps of death. Are you willing that such shall be the end of your romance, of your loyalty?' The great light reflected beneath seemed to be gazing at him.

Even as the fancy came he beheld—whether with the eyes of flesh or only with those of the spirit, who shall say? —the depths of the river lit up, its secret places opening; he beheld its slimy banks and muddy, festering floor, which some indescribable vegetation clothed and made more horrible, and the dark yellow waters rushing along, ghastly in a pale flame, which gave them a half transparency, and which illuminated that pathway of the drowned as if it were a mausoleum wherein sacrifices to the dead, or on behalf of them, were to be offered that night. He saw the multitude crowding upon one another, and again they seemed to be each in its own solitude; so that he was oppressed at one and the same time with contradictory feelings of a throng from which there was no escape save into the unlighted abysses beyond, and a loneliness where no voice came. His ear seemed to detect the sound of footsteps moving swiftly or slowly, but oftenest with the dragging gait of despair, moving from the distant city streets, from east and west, from north and south, from the ends of the earth, converging all towards the spot where he was standing,—a ceaseless, dreadful march of those that did not know one another, nor in this life ever should, but were contributing to swell one host, and precipitating themselves into a common grave. The river itself was peopled with the dead; but still the dead came hurrying, crowding, rushing with maddened steps, or creeping as in a dream, along all the ways which led up to the bridge and into the flaming waters. There was no other sound than the march of innumerable feet, no outcry to pierce the ear of darkness and wake those that slept in their warm beds, oblivious of their brothers and sisters who, fainting under the weary load of life, came to cast it from them into depths where it should be found [illegible] more. He heard the steps behind him, around him; the pavements were alive with them, but the host marching forward was already engulfed in the jaws of death. And as they pressed down into the river, breathless, hopeless, with wild eyes and haggard looks, he saw the numbers of them that had entered into this sabbath of suicides rise in their dripping garments to meet their associates in crime and desolation. The multitude grew

and grew; but there was ever fresh room as it moved downward to the remoter places, whence, as it seemed to him, the ascending tide was bringing a noise of the sea and of the night-winds struggling upon it. Here was the waste of the world, the human souls and bodies for which in life no room could be discovered nor a ransom given: here was a redemption wrought for others, for the happy among men, by suffering. But how unlike that redemption spoken of in the churches! For upon this no resurrection followed; it was an offering of victims whereof account was not made and whose pains had but one alleviation—that they were ended by death. Or was it possible that the great sea towards which the throng seemed to be moving might prove more dreadful than the river? Had those old tales of the fiery deep, and the streams of lament and forgetfulness, any truth in them which made of suicide not only the dreariest but the deadliest of sins? What did that stony look in the eyes, what did that scared hue upon the cheeks portend? A wasted life might then be nothing in comparison with a self-inflicted death. The dark realms; the infinite shadow; the jaws which opened from beneath, in the deeps immeasurable; the grave that was but an entrance to a lower grave, which would swallow the living soul as these waters had sucked down the body,—yes, it was more natural to believe in them here, when sin and death met face to face. And was Hippolyta to join this multitude, to dedicate her purity and her young affection to the powers of darkness, turning from the glory of the sun to go down such ways into the everlasting sea, whence no bark would bring her again or any mortal?

He could bear it no longer. With these pursuing thoughts behind him, he quitted his station on the bridge, and hastily descended into the streets once more. He fled from himself, from Hippolyta, from the night, from the morning, which had almost begun to dawn while he looked into that awful gallery of the dead. He was utterly bewildered and undone. Conscience smote him on one side and on the other; whatever he should resolve would be wrong, and fatality was dogging his steps never to leave him. But for a little while, cost what it might, he must become

blind and heedless. He would go home, to rest if it were possible, and let to-morrow bring what it pleased.

In such confusion did he arrive, weary and chilled to the marrow, at his own house. He let himself in. The moon was still shining when he entered. Creeping noiselessly upstairs, he undressed in the light which came in at his window, and with a heavy sigh lay down to sleep. When he woke again it was broad day. A gleam of the early sunshine rested on his face; and he rose with an instant remembrance of the scenes through which he had passed.

'Rupert,' he said to himself between scorn and pity, 'is this to be the last day of your blameless life? Well, well; and what shall be the reward?'

He dressed quickly, swallowed a mouthful of breakfast, and went out. After walking through several streets, he looked round at a point where no one seemed to be in sight but the driver of a hansom cab, who was just then passing under the archway of a mews with his vehicle. Rupert hailed him, and bade him drive at his fastest pace to an address in the suburbs. It was a long way off. 'There is not a moment to spare,' said the artist as he sprang in.

CHAPTER XXII

EATING THE LOTUS DAY BY DAY

THE time is a month or so since Rupert's long drive out of town; the scene an old-fashioned garden, shaded largely with elm and lime, but with sunny spaces too, where flowers and fruits and vegetables seem to be growing side by side in pleasant neighbourhood. A hot July sun is sending down its floods of splendour, but little tempered by the specks of cloud which hang timidly in the sky and are the remnant of a glorious fleece that melted into the azure some hours ago. Three o'clock is striking from the church steeple, which can be seen at some distance peering up through the trees; for, near as it is to London, timber of an honest, ancient sort is still plentiful all about, and especially on the long ascent of the main road, which within the memory of man was the High Street of a thriving village, but is now fresh named, to denote its absorption into the mighty maze of the great city. A second clock makes itself heard in a second church, more modern than the red brick edifice which has served the parish time out of mind—more modern and much nearer, since only the garden wall divides it from the garden. It is a large, handsome building of ragstone, and will look picturesque when the mosses and ivies have grown over it and taken from it the too fresh appearance as if it had been built yesterday. Other houses, of many shapes and varying dates, but most of them counting their century, are within view, each with its own garden, and with rows of plants in bloom at the upper windows—for we cannot see the lower ones here. There is a quiet hum in the atmosphere as of

business, which keeps the place alive and astir, but which has not overpowered its habit of retirement, of well-to-do leisure, of middle-class ease and plenty—perhaps one should rise to a higher strain and say, of refined gentility seeking to combine the neighbourhood of town with trim gardens, winding green lanes, a pathway beyond the palings over-arched with boughs like the boulevard of a foreign city, and detached residences, inherited from one's grandfather, or taken at a handsome figure for a term of years. The prevailing tone is red brick, intermingled with dense green foliage; the roads are hard and firm, with a layer of white sand just now overspreading them, from which rises an occasional cloud of summer dust. No railway station comes nearer than a mile; and the omnibuses which convey the pilgrim hither are less gaudily painted than those which perambulate the leading thoroughfares of Town. Smart carriages roll from time to time up the ascent, which is now called in the street directory Bransmere Road; and their brilliant lamps, when in winter they draw up before various of these fine old mansions towards the dinner-hour, or stand waiting at half-past ten to take their occupants home again, are a pleasant sight under the trees, like the hugest of fire-flies resting motionless in the shade.

But why speak of winter on such a day? It is over and forgotten. All the doors and windows stand open, and on the road outside, which is just visible over the garden-gate, one can see the vibration in the air which is caused by a long and steady heat, and is the beginning—and as far as we ever get in England—of the mirage that works such deluding miracles in the countries of the sun. But there is a pleasant feeling of coolness in the central alley with its screen of overhanging boughs. And there Rupert and Hippolyta are walking side by side, slowly, as if to take in the beauty around. They are under the spell of this exquisite summer afternoon, when to live is simply delightful, and to be in each other's company the crown of joy.

Hippolyta speaks. 'I never saw a prettier old garden. It is full of flowery nooks where no foot seems to have trodden, places all tangled in roses and wildbriar, which some day you ought to paint, Rupert. I do not think

I have thoroughly explored it yet. As for the house, I give it up. When I fancy the last door has at length been unlocked, the last case of old china discovered, I find another door that I have overlooked in a corner or behind a screen, another room with curiosities enough to furnish a museum of jewellery, glass, and deep-hued porcelain. And the queer, old Dutch pictures, how odd and amusing they look! What a fairy palace to me, who have never seen such things except in show-houses abroad! I wonder you could live in London when you had this at your disposal.'

'I have not had it long to live in, remember. Nor, if you will believe it, should I feel, if I lived here, the inspiration to realise beautiful or odd fancies which comes upon me in that dark London house, or while I am endeavouring to save my life in crossing Piccadilly. I used once to think that an artist should paint with the loveliest scenes in view. But now I doubt very much whether it could be done.'

'Don't you feel inspired when I am here to be your muse of painting?' she asked with her bewitching smile.

He looked at her very tenderly. 'Inspired to work by and by; yes. But not when you are present. You send the sunlight into my eyes, and they are too full of colour to see.'

'By and by will not be long, Rupert,' she answered, no longer with a smile. 'Your holiday will be out in less than a week, and you must go back to Trelingham. How hateful! Why cannot we stay as we are, and you renounce fame as I have renounced society?' But, seeing him put on a serious look, she added, 'Now, you dear boy, smooth out that wrinkled brow. You know I mean nothing except that I want your company always, and grudge every minute of it. You cannot renounce your fame; neither ought you to throw up your engagement with Lord Trelingham.'

'I will, if you wish, Hippolyta. What keeps me to it but a sense of honour? Name and fame were much to me when I had only myself to live for. It is different now. I can paint pictures to please you, or to express my own feelings, as other men write poems or achieve greatness

in war. But for the public, my quondam mistress, I care as little as you do for the flowers you plucked last spring.'

'Yes, yes, Rupert, you are brave and loving. But I am not going to make a Tannhäuser of you for all that, although I may be thought no better than my Lady Venus,' and she covered her face with her hands. 'You shall return to Trelingham; but what, oh what, am I to do when you are gone? Our honeymoon is past in a moment. So long as you are with me it seems that time stands still; I do not reckon it or mind the hours at all. But what a long, long day of emptiness it was when you went up to town last week! Time stood still in another fashion then. I thought you would never come home. For it is home, is it not, this old house in a garden where you have hidden away your Hippolyta? At least, I have none if it be not.' She looked sad in the midst of her happiness. Rupert had noticed it before. Was it only the thought of parting with him? He felt uncertain.

'I wish you would tell me, Hippolyta,' he said, in answer to her speech, 'whether you were ever melancholy at Falside?'

'I melancholy! what makes you imagine it? Not in the least. When my mother lived, we were the brightest of company; and though I felt her loss exceedingly, and do feel it, I should be telling you false if I said that I was melancholy about her. It was a different thing from melancholy—pure, unmixed sorrow.'

'Yes, exactly. I think that must be very true. But since, since you left Falside, since I brought you here, has there not been a shade of melancholy on your countenance? I do not mean always; it was there a moment ago. It has come back since I began speaking.'

'I cannot see my own face,' she answered, and would [illegible] said no more. But something prompted her to con- [illegible] ws very [illegible] of the [illegible] to make certain that we have a fever. You ask me a question I have put to myself sometimes, but cannot answer. Shall we talk over it? Will you be the physician to enlighten me?'

'Then you have been melancholy even in the midst of our great happiness,' concluded Rupert with a sigh. 'And what have you gained by quitting the old paths? Ah, me!'

'Do not be troubled,' she said affectionately; 'am I not a woman and therefore subject to fears, to fancies, to overshadowing from those clouds of ignorance and superstition which have darkened the lives of one half the human race from the day it began? My reason tells me that we are, and for a long while must remain, the weaker sex, thanks to the institutions that have made us so. When I tremble and am afraid I know well it is the inherited malady which is giving signs of its existence.'

'And is that all? or do you repent of the step we have taken?'

'Ask me whether I repent of loving you! No, Rupert, I could not have imagined in my brightest day-dreams that such happiness was in store. It fills my heart to overflowing; and when you see me cry, as yesterday, you ought to think that it rains out of my eyes, for that is the reason, and will be, if I am agitated, restless, fervent. I must learn music to calm these wild transports. Have not you and I been in the golden heart of joy these many, these too quickly-passing days? I have felt like one suddenly caught up to the sun and allowed to wander at will through its glowing realms, with radiant lights on every side, and the dark earth so far away I could hardly tell where it was. Why,' she said, laughing, 'you will make me talk allegories, unless you say something yourself.'

'But still,' persisted Rupert, 'you have not always felt the radiance about you. The glory has changed, and melancholy come in its stead. Your temperament has been unequal; and once even, Hippolyta, I thought you avoided me.'

'Now you are giving me your own impressions, which may be nearer the truth than mine. It is such a strange, new feeling that you belong to another, and that the freedom of your former days will never return, is it not? Then, too, although what I did should be done over again to-morrow, if it were necessary, I am not the bold young lady you might have thought me, judging only by that night.

was bold at the time; and I daresay courage will never be wanting to me when circumstances are there to call it forth. But my resolution cost me an effort; the last part of it,' she went on, her voice sinking, 'more than I can well account for. I am sure that I do not fear death; and yet, since it is all over and past, my mind misgives me. I could not, indeed, indeed I could not have lived, Rupert, if you had sent me away. And so I tell myself when these sad thoughts come accusing me. It was not that I meant to alarm your affection; but when I considered the days I should have spent if we were to become strangers, I saw no motive for living. But I did in some way threaten you that night with what I should do, and now I am grieved over it.'

'Never mind, never mind, dearest,' he said. Their meeting in the studio was a thing he did not wish to recall; he had put it far from him, and not gone near the place except for a few hours, when he gave orders to have his pictures and painting materials carried elsewhither. He meant never to set foot in it again. For him it would be ever haunted with direful memories. He went on:

'From what you say, it is partly reaction, and will go off when you are quite used to your new surroundings. Do not give way to it. I shall never blame you for the past, and you must not dwell any more, Hippolyta, on the accidents that have brought us together. If you can resolve, as I have told you with all the earnestness of which I am capable, to go through the ceremonies of marriage, civil or religious, I am here to fulfil my part. I will not torment you about it, or say a single word more except by your permission. But, at all events, should you feel regret or discomfort, you know the way out of it.'

'I do, I do,' she answered. 'You are generous both in what you ask and in what you give up. I am not melancholy on that score, and not much on any,' she continued, brightening. 'We have talked too seriously, Rupert. Is it not time to drive somewhere and teach me my way about these rustic lanes? I shall want to know them well when you are in the West Country,—a thousand miles away from me—since I cannot follow you.'

'I will order the carriage,' he said. 'Go to your room and get ready. There is a drive along the brow of the hill which we have not taken.'

She ran up the garden with a fleet footstep, and was heard a moment after singing in her room above, as she moved hither and thither. Glanville, his eyes and his heart full of love, gave a glance at her window, where for an instant he saw her dress fluttering when she passed, and went round to the stables a happy yet preoccupied man. What an inexplicable fate was his! The bright sky and summer hours, in which all things beautiful came forth to view, clad in their gayest attire, the very loveliness and wit of Hippolyta, seemed but to deepen his pensive mood. Their joy had been great—extreme; too great to last, he would murmur, when he looked on the countenance of his beloved, and observed in it the shade of some bitter or painful reflection, which, like a change in the evening lights, was gone ere he could decipher its meaning. But his own feelings were not unmixed either. He had spoken the truth when, in the long hours of that night-wandering about London, he described himself as no libertine. The record of his life held in it nothing that men count disgrace. It has been widely believed that genius implies or requires self-indulgence, and that only the Fornarina can inspire a Raffaelle. The creed, however, is uncertain, and Rupert's autobiography would, on the whole, have tended to disprove it. I do not say that he was immaculate, that, more invincible than Samson, he had never been 'effeminately vanquished.' But if he had now and again yielded to the temptation of a lovely face, a certain fastidiousness of sense held him above the vulgar range of low desire. He was serious, enthusiastic, given to labour, well content with Ivor's friendship instead of a thousand which were to be had for the asking. When love came, he said, he would make it welcome; and he waited, not impatiently, till its day should 'peer forth the golden windows of the East.' He had not been thought the worse company for a little self-restraint, although in consequence he never went beyond civil terms with various great persons in the world of art. When, as will happen, he heard the moral code expounded with that

liberty which is thought to betoken a mind above prejudice, he felt little inclination to assent. Ivor and he were agreed that a man may discard the official religion, yet be under strict orders from a higher court to respect human nature in himself. He did not pretend to be an ascetic or a Puritan, but at six and twenty, he thought, there was no need to be in a violent hurry; he would not squander his youth nor drain a cup to which the great enchantment was lacking. It might be interesting to discover when and how he came upon the momentous truth that love is of the spirit rather than of earth and the senses, or by what process he had convinced himself that no warmth of affection will compensate for the absence of respect. He believed, too, in love at first sight, and discoursed wisely on the reciprocal attractions that Nature has put into hearts of flesh no less certainly than into threads of steel and amber. But he would have resisted his drawing towards Hippolyta had she not seemed in his eyes a lovely, innocent soul of which outward beauty was the fitting apparel. And now——?

I should be describing a phantasm, and not Rupert Glanville, did I pretend that when the cup which held this great enchantment, running over with love, was pressed to his lips, he did not drink deep of its sweetness. Enthusiasm was part of his nature, and he resolved to make Hippolyta happy, and himself through her,—happy as they could be in the abundance of their varied gifts, the freshness of youth, and the enjoyment of love. Putting the world out of view, dismissing every thought of the future, leaving his reputation as a man, his fame as an artist, to take care of itself, Rupert—not unlike the knight of love to whom Hippolyta compared him, but with eyes open and will determined—had come into the Venusberg and was willing to spend, not seven years, but his life to the very end with the lady of his devotion. If, on the one hand, he felt compunction for the daring step she had taken, on the other it was a dream of his earliest days to sacrifice himself to another. 'All for love and the world well lost.' Those were words he would have inscribed on his stainless shield, and counted them a consecration. Had Hippolyta required only the ordinary sacrifice which men approve because it is cast in

moulds familiar to them! But what was this new virtue rooted in something which to the common judgment looked like vice? Well, he did not dwell upon it in the first days of their life together. He shut out the judgments of society. Away from Trelingham, from London, where his letters lay neglected, in a house that had few associations with his previous existence, and seeing every moment a companion whose charm grew with the increasing confidence of their intercourse, who suffered from no misgivings as to the legitimacy or the unchangeable character of their relations, but was tranquil, and modest, and delightfully original in whatever she said or did, it is easy to understand how Rupert, like a man carried out to sea upon a great wave, was unable to return upon his former thoughts or to resist the current which drove him onward. He might rue it bitterly afterwards, when the wave was spent or the returning tide had cast him on shore. But there is a strong fascination in the opinion of another when it confirms or excuses our own. Hippolyta did not move, she did not look like a being upon whom degradation had fallen. She kept in her eyes that gaze of seraphic astonishment, as it has well been termed, which, when Nature fixes it in the human countenance, would persuade us against our senses that innocence dwells within. Its light was subdued by melancholy at times; and who, with the tender feelings of Rupert, could rebuke her then? He melted into adoring pity, into a childlike devotion that knew no bounds, and that uttered itself in terms which breathed the affection, the seriousness, the playful, half-deliberate simplicity of the heart when it is touched to the core.

The house to which he had taken her seemed made for a romantic chapter of existence such as they were going through. It had belonged to Rupert from the time he was at school, having been left him by an ancient lady, his grand-aunt, to whom he was very dear, though she seldom was in a state of health which permitted her to have a talkative and rather troublesome boy in the house. He had therefore seldom been on a visit at Forrest House, nor, it must be admitted, did he look forward to staying there; for it seemed to his juvenile apprehension dark and

gloomy, full of uninhabited corners, and not lightened up by the extremely white face and long trailing garments of black silk, and the black lace shawls, which made up for him the impression of his grand-aunt. He liked her in his general way of liking all who were kind to him. But he was glad to be out of doors whenever Miss Atterbury would allow him to run about, and at other times to stay with the Dutch pictures and explain in his own mind the scenes which they delineated. When his grand-aunt died he attended her funeral; and he remembered, but not well, being told by a gentleman in black, who proved in after years to be the family solicitor, that Forrest House and the properties thereunto appertaining were his own, to be held in trust till he came of age. He thought little on the subject; his father's small estate, lying on the borders of Shropshire, and in a beautiful hilly region, pleased him much better than this old red mansion, nor did he for a long while understand that it brought him a not insignificant part of his annual income.

Immediately on the old lady's death it had been let, furniture and all just as it stood, to another lady not quite so old. She survived till Rupert was five and twenty; but he never had occasion to make himself known to her, and did not see Forrest House for a good fourteen years. Her death left it vacant; and the family solicitor was looking for a suitable tenant when Rupert, to his own great astonishment and with a feeling of shame, informed him that he might spare himself the trouble, and that the house was disposed of. What sort of person the incoming tenant was, or on what terms he had taken the place, Glanville did not say.

On driving thither that morning he had dismissed the cabman at the door, and showing a card from his solicitor to the housekeeper, who had never set eyes on Glanville, he went over the principal rooms. They were in admirable condition, and needed but some few alterations to fit them for Hippolyta. He gave the orders at once, stating his intention of taking possession that very afternoon, and assuring the housekeeper that she should receive a telegram from the solicitor which would authorise these prompt measures as

soon as he had reached that gentleman's office. She inquired the new tenant's name. He had not thought of one, and did not answer on the spur of the moment. To the housekeeper he seemed rather absent-minded; but the fact was that he could think of no other name than his own. 'The solicitor will tell you,' he said; and he hurried away. He called the first cab which he saw going down the descent, and paid a hasty visit to his man of law, during which it appeared that Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm, intimate friends of his, wanted the house, and as they happened to be travelling in the neighbourhood would like to make trial of it at once. He was decisive and peremptory; dictated the terms of the telegram lest there should arise difficulties at the other end; left the solicitor's office the moment all was concluded, and on the stroke of noon entered the studio. Hippolyta was expecting him. No words passed between them except the brief sentences in which he asked whether she was ready, and what she proposed to do with the luggage she had left on arriving from Falside. It was thought prudent to take it with them; lost or relinquished luggage gives rise to inquiry; and they drove together, for the first time—these engaged lovers—in a London cab, not speaking one word as they went along. They did not even clasp hands. A feeling of some decisive event taking place, too grave and solemn for the expression of any sentiment, was in the hearts of both. Thus they set out on what seemed the interminable drive to Forrest House, and arrived about six o'clock. It was not twenty-four hours since Hippolyta had alighted in Rupert's studio.

But with the change of scene and of name—for to the latter precaution Hippolyta, though very reluctantly, gave her consent,—with this, I say, their solemn feelings vanished. The artist had disappeared; the young lady of Falside was known no more. Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm, a young married couple, ardently attached to one another, never seen apart by the neighbours who observed that Forrest House had been let, and unobserved by the rest of humankind, were living a fantastic, yet a real existence, which seemed to dispense with all ties of duty or obligations towards their fellows. They had but one duty, to be

each other's company at all times; but one obligation—which they did not appear to think a burden—that of loving one another. They fleeted the time carelessly, as in the golden age. They received no letters, read no journals, received no visits. The old housekeeper had strict injunctions not to admit callers beyond the gate; and when Sunday came, she was perplexed and horrified on seeing that neither the young lady nor her husband went to church. They might indeed be Roman Catholics, and were perhaps ignorant that the Gothic edifice on the other side of the wall was of that persuasion. She gently hinted as much to Mrs. Malcolm on the Monday morning; but no, Mrs. Malcolm said they were not Roman Catholics. And during the four Sundays of their stay hitherto they had not seen the inside of a sacred building. They spent the Day of Rest exactly like the other six days of the week, in painting and singing, and exploring the old house, and rambling about the garden hand in hand, or driving among the more sequestered lanes. Only once did Mr. Malcolm go up to town; and Mrs. Malcolm passed the whole afternoon near the garden-gate, sometimes opening it to look down the road, as though by looking and wishing she could bring him home a little earlier. When he did arrive she was overcome with infantine joy, and laughed and sang, and danced a step or two about him as they went up the path together. Neither housemaid nor housekeeper—there were only these servants indoors—had seen a bride so unmistakably in love. And the bridegroom seemed equally enchanted.

It was so indeed. Their attachment, sudden as on both sides it had been, like the outburst of birds in springtime under the influence of the newly-brightening sun and fresh warm air, was deep as their nature. Rupert, whose mobile temper and susceptibility of imagination added an intense earnestness to whatever he undertook, was now wrought up to a pure enthusiasm in which he felt like an actor in some great tragic movement, the *denouement* of which—as on the Roman stage when an emperor commanded—might become not acting but reality. He had lived much alone, and had acquired that turn for concealment or reserve

which would have led him, without much pressing, to join in any kind of secret undertaking, provided it were not dishonourable. A secret marriage would certainly not have shocked him; and in keeping acquaintance at bay, inventing expedients which might throw them out, or making covert journeys into the blue distance, he would have been as fertile as the heroes of Dumas or Eugène Sue. But then, a secret marriage need not be dishonourable. And was the loyalty which now engaged him to live under cloud of night a thing to be ashamed of? or had he not done his best to persuade Hippolyta, and could he now by taking measures compel her to submit to the ways of the world? He would not do it, he said to himself; in all but name theirs was a true marriage; and the sense of mystery heightened his passion. Great as is the force of public opinion, and in various respects more potent than ever it was, it has nothing sacred about it, and a man who chooses to live out of society, or to live in it and be wary, need not fear that his individual freedom will suffer or his comings and goings be severely scrutinised. There are so many standards in the field, that he who does battle against one is pretty sure to find the folds of another waving over him. Rupert, indeed, could not have explained to a man of the world on what conditions Hippolyta had become his without exposing her and himself to ridicule. He would have been asked in a bantering voice why he sought far-fetched reasons for what was the simplest thing imaginable. But very few would have inquired, and still fewer cared to know, why Miss Valence had accepted him. All that society demanded of Rupert was to keep his own counsel, go his way, and observe the proprieties. Whether he lived a double life—was Mr. Glanville the famous artist in Belgravia, and Mr. Malcolm the idle young gentleman at Forrest House—concerned nobody but himself. The penalty was for bringing these things on the stage. And Rupert, who was well acquainted with the rules of modern society, although hitherto not called on to practise this particular one, felt by turns amused and melancholy,—amused at lying *perdu* in such a way when he ought to have been cultivating life in London drawing-rooms and enjoying the season; melan-

choly that it was for Hippolyta's sake he had put on the outward seeming of an ill-regulated life. He shrank from the question how long it might continue. He was in the fairyland of first love, of reverie and romance, of innocence which took on the colour of guilt, and of guilt which seemed primeval innocence. The world of every day might be near, but it was on the other side of the mountains which made a steep inaccessible wall between it and them. The lovers had only to forget; there came neither voice nor portent out of the rosy sky under which they roamed, or from the trees of the forest which grew up, friendly and large-leaved, around them.

No portent out of the rosy sky; but still, as we have seen, a something in Hippolyta which, like the thinnest cloud, was visible to another, to Rupert, not to herself whom it passed upon. She would be momentarily pensive, leaning her beautiful head upon her hand, with such tender, thoughtful grace as that of Juliet meditating in the balcony, while Romeo stands watching her. But she did not know why she should be less gay at one time than at another. It was a novel experience; for, though she had gone through suffering in childhood, she had not dreamt sad dreams as she did now.

CHAPTER XXIII

GO NOT, HAPPY DAY!

THE explanation which lay close at hand, which indeed Rupert would have been almost glad to receive, that she repented of her daring, and was ready, though ashamed of confessing it, to go through the form of marriage, did not even occur to Hippolyta. It was not true. A universal nonconformist does not feel the shock of any one act which, by itself, would be a challenge to society at large. Why, then, was she melancholy? She did not know. And, like the determined character she was, she formed a resolution to shake it off. Perhaps it came from having so little to do. She had not been taught to spend her days in amusement, but in labour; and this life of silken ease did not agree with one whose care had been extended not only to the management of Falside, but to the large correspondence which she received or transmitted on behalf of Colonel Valence, and whose exercise had been riding over a wild country.

'It must be that,' she said to Rupert, as they were driving after the conversation we have recorded. 'I am much like a peasant girl in my tastes; and although these hours of talking and moving about the garden are exquisitely dear to me, they suppose habits, good or bad, which I have not acquired. You artists, I see, are indolent by nature; you get enough out-door exercise by fancying the landscape you are going to paint, or, perhaps, by looking at one you have painted. But we poor creatures of clay must gallop over the fields, plant the trees, and mow the grass which you are content to be gazing at. Tell me what I should do, not what I should be or suffer; for I was made for action.'

'You talk,' answered Rupert, with his ironical smile, 'like a great philosopher—I forget his name—who said that action was the end of life. It is a doctrine that doesn't agree with me. The art of doing nothing demands unusual genius in this wretched country, where everybody seems to have lost the knowledge of its existence. But it is a very fine art indeed.'

'I daresay,' answered Hippolyta, who had her own small gift of irony; 'and you practise it, don't you, Rupert, when you spend every hour of daylight painting, and all the dark hours in thinking over what you are going to paint?'

'I knew how to be idle once,' he replied, 'but it was in my better days, when the first delight of inspiration made work not only impossible but absurd. I should then as soon have thought of painting my imaginations as Adam of leaving Paradise to make himself a plough and raise corn in the North-Western territory. My Paradise was within. What did it matter to anybody else if I did not work? I was happy.'

'What made you work at last?' she inquired.

'I do not know. Ambition, I suppose. Or it may have been the awakening of a new faculty which the books describe as the need of expressing one's self. It is a curious law that when we have gone on thinking a certain time we must tell our thoughts to somebody else. Murder will out, and so will genius.'

'And love, too,' she said, blushing. 'You have forgotten that.'

'Oh, love,' he said, 'of course; but love is such a born babbler.'

'I was thinking of another kind of love,' she went on when he stopped; 'you must not laugh at it, although in you it has not awakened yet—that love which my father calls philanthropy! Don't you think there may be a passion of pity, a desire to help human creatures because they are human?' She seemed a little anxious to hear what he would say.

'My dear,' he answered, 'Colonel Valence is a man of remarkable character and pronounced opinions. I was not

brought up in the same school. I dislike the sight of misery—at least,' he added with a smile which showed he was not serious, 'when it does not lend itself to picturesque treatment. But in abstract virtues I have very small confidence. To me the human race seems too large a thing to care about. To tell the truth, I don't care about it. But,' he said, looking at her, 'you have a motive in asking me. What is it, dear? In you these abstract virtues become a quality I can love. Do you want me to turn philanthropist? I will try, though I warn you the attempt will most likely prove a dead failure. I am no Abou Hassan, if that was the good creature's name that begged the recording angel to set him down as one that loved his fellow-men. I neither hate them nor love them. What I say to them is, you let me alone and I will let you alone. But I can try, you know.'

'It is not that,' she answered; 'I was thinking rather of myself. When you are away from me, what shall I do to keep myself alive? There is nobody to visit, and I could not subsist on visiting, if there were hundreds. You have forbidden me to engage in household work, so that will not be a resource—at least until I have coaxed you into a better mind. Reading, practising music—oh dear! what are these but the make-believe employments of a fashionable young person who knows no other way of killing time? I do not wish to kill time, but to live, and it has occurred to me that I might take lessons in my proper profession—of looking after men and women in distress.'

'But can you go about and not be discovered?' he asked, with the uncertain accent of a man who would like to refuse, and yet was willing to yield for love's sake.

'Why should I be discovered? The only human being that has an interest in me besides you, Rupert, is my father. If I could have foreseen these events I would have asked his guidance. Now it is too late. He gave me no address; he said that there was none to give, and I must wait patiently for his return—if return should be possible to him. Our old Dolores will send me the message when it comes. As for others, who is there? I am quite alone, without friend or relative in the world. The change

name will be enough to guard against accidents. It would be another thing were you to accompany me, for you have, unluckily, celebrated features; and others besides Mr. Davenant might remember the portrait in the Academy. But, sir, you shall not come anywhere within reach of my poor.' She gave him a charming look.

'And will you, Hippolyta, promise not to visit houses where there is infection? I shall not consent otherwise,' he said in determined accents.

She reflected before answering. 'I do not think it is quite right to promise absolutely. How could I visit on both sides of an infected house and shrink from entering there? But since you are lord and master, I will engage never to do so without consulting you first. Will that satisfy you?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'for I shall never give you permission.' And so it was settled, and Rupert turned the horses' heads towards home.

They spent the rest of the evening in making arrangements for his departure, and planning methods of correspondence. The latter was not easy. Hippolyta, as they were sitting after dinner in the twilight, looking out on their garden, suggested that Mr. Glanville might write direct to his friend Mr. Malcolm at Forrest House; and if Mrs. Malcolm answered for her husband by writing to Mr. Glanville's house in town, whence her letters should be sent on under cover, there would be little chance of detection, especially when she had mastered the new style of caligraphy whereat she was now diligent. To provide against accidents they fixed on a set of enigmatical expressions, which might be inserted in the *Times* if other channels of communication were not speedy enough. And, at the worst, Mr. Malcolm could telegraph from Forrest House to Trelingham Court. These young people grew merry over the difficulties in which they found themselves. It seemed an excellent, and might prove an exciting, game of hide-and-seek. They did not trouble about the distant future. One thing must be done at a time, one business put out of hand. When the designs in the Great Hall were pretty well complete, Rupert fancied he might leave the

rest of the details to one of his friends. In that case they would leave England and fix their home in France or Italy. Much might depend on the adventures, in regions whither Glanville could not follow him, of Colonel Valence; something, too,—the artist murmured in a low aside,—on the development of Hippolyta's character under these novel influences, and with so great a break between her present and her former life. At any rate, they would not stay in England a day longer than was necessary. None are so free as English travellers on the Continent; they have slipped the collar of their dear native habits, and their reputation, gained at the cost of some eccentricity during the last seventy years, is now well established as men and women who are a law unto themselves. The essential thing was to get quit of Trelingham and its associations. Denying themselves a longer *tête-à-tête* now was the sure means of making it perpetual hereafter.

But when, on the morrow, Rupert was gone, Hippolyta shut herself up in her room. She left untasted the dainty meal which had been prepared by the housekeeper. She had never felt so lonely in her life. Sitting at the window whence they had gazed out together at the fading light, and enjoyed the perfumes of the garden beneath them during the long evenings of June, she went over the thoughts they had shared, the words of affection and trust they had spoken. For one short month she had known what human companionship was in perfection; she had tasted the honey-sweet nectar, and its delight, mounting to her brain, had filled every little act and momentary interchange of feeling with unspeakable poetry. This, then, was the crown of life—to love and to be loved; there was nothing beyond it, nothing to compare with it, nothing that would compensate for its loss. But why should she fear to lose it? Rupert was fra[illegible] and faithful; what greater proof could he have given of his [illegible]ardent devotion? He would never be false; the hea[illegible]n of their love was sure. And yet, and yet, how melanch[illegible]ly was her feeling now he no longer sat by the window [illegible]ing her of the thousand things he knew! A few months [illegible] he was a stranger whose life or death mattered to her n[illegible]t at all; now he was her world, her paradise, her

While she stayed in her attitude of wistful reflection, and the sky grew clearer and the faint hues of sunset died away into a steely twilight, the forerunner of the stars which by and by would rise in the summer night, she heard the sound of music, of an organ playing and voices accompanying it, in the church whose southern windows were visible from her own. There were lights within, and the stained glass, which must have looked dark to the worshippers, had now become faintly transparent on the outside, showing, although in dull confusion of colour, the forms of saints and angels, of quaint vestments and broad glowing wings, crimson or ruby, intermixed with the gold of sceptres, crowns, Gothic lilies, and other medieval symbols. It was a fantastic, unreal vision, as of life in a child's picture-book, or on a long roll of tapestry, unlike anything we see walking the world, without perspective or proportion, but perhaps for that reason appealing to a sense of dim possibilities which lurks in our severest calculations and is never more awake than when we have lost what we prize. Hippolyta, still chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, at first took no notice of the stained windows; yet the vision pleased her unawares, the medley of colours made her smile, and if it did not soothe, it distracted her. Imagination played among them and endeavoured to make out the innocent child-faces which were seen in reversed outline, yet even so preserved something of their comeliness, and grew fairer as the evening closed in about them. It was a large building, and the windows stood high between their buttresses. More and more distinct and solemn pealed forth the tones of the organ; its music rolled along the painted windows and seemed to be echoed back from the farther end of the church; while the voices of the choir, coming in from time to time, rose and fell in a slow religious chant, subdued to perfect harmony where Hippolyta sat listening,—or could it be called listening? for she heard the voices as she might have heard the winds in a forest, not heeding them, though allowing her thoughts to be influenced by their unceasing murmur. She did not know what the voices sang, why the lights were kindled, or the painted windows began to blaze at that hour. These things did not enter into her life, but they exalted and in

some degree pacified her melancholy, connecting it with the grave enthusiasm of the unknown rite, with old-time memories and the sadness of the world. It seemed as though out of the darkness had risen a company, strange to her and never before seen, which in language incomprehensible yet significant chanted their sorrows, their hopes, their dim aspirations, telling her that she was not alone in the troubled night. They were human beings, not supernatural visitants; but, hidden while they sang, they might have put off the grotesque accidents of humanity, its vulgar habiliments and grossness of surroundings; they were spirit-voices, uttering themselves from a heart like her own. She listened more intently, and that heart melted. Sweet tears began to flow, tears of compassion, at first for herself, and then for she knew not what,—for the grief which makes men and women desolate, for the heavy fate that weighs upon our mortal frame, for the hope that is long deferred. Her thoughts wandered away from Rupert into realms of vague surmise and meditation. It was an experience not unlike that which had befallen her on the evening of the ball, when amid the strains of joyous music one single note of wailing had brought her the vision of the suffering multitude. But in the great bursts of organ music there was nothing discordant or lightly mocking; hope and pity were blended in the enunciation of a harmony without end. She did not despise herself for letting the floods of this sacred music pour in upon her soul, as she had been tempted to despise herself during the waltz. For it seemed to her that all the sweetness was purchased here by self-sacrifice, by fellow-feeling with them that suffered,—the great article of her creed early and late. She could not have told when the organ ceased. Her mind was far away.

CHAPTER XXIV

MANIBUS DATE LILIA PLENIS

WHEN Rupert returned to Trelingham he found many things changed, nor was the prevailing tone similar to that which had struck him on his first arrival. One may truly say, with the French proverb, that love had passed that way; and though its effects were not visible on the surface, they were none the less real. Tom Davenant, twice foiled in his endeavour to make his cousin the heiress of her father's property, was gone; nor did it appear when he would return, if ever, during Lord Trelingham's lifetime. He was now in London with his mother, desperately uncertain what to do next, and projecting an expedition to South America or the Rocky Mountains as soon as he could light upon a companion. His absence, silent and shy though the young man had been, left a perceptible gap; to be with him, Rupert said, was as good as daily bread; it was wholesome and nourishing, although you could not detect a particular flavour in it. But he could no longer be reckoned a member of that household. Lady May did not mention him. The Earl was equally reticent. Other guests came and went; it was not a lonely place; but among them Rupert saw none to attract him, and he was not disposed to cultivate them from motives of worldly interest. He threw himself into his task, which had been neglected for so many summer days. He was up early and late, dined by himself as often as at the Earl's table, excused his solitude on the plea that he had devoured all his leisure while away, and lived on Hippolyta's letters, which came regularly every morning, forty-eight hours after they were written. For

they had to be taken in and re-addressed at his London house.

One person had remained at the Court whom he heartily wished a thousand miles off; but she had apparently her own reasons for staying. I need not say that it was the Countess Lutenieff. In former days she had taken hardly more notice of him than of 'the mechanic,' Ivor Mardol. She now greeted him ostentatiously, came with her light *insouciant* manner into the Great Hall, tripped about on the scaffolding to the imminent risk of her own neck, and was, in short, much in his way. Rupert had not the brusque address of some great artists; he could not be rude to a lady (unless, Hippolyta would have interposed, he happened to be very much in love with her), and he was vexed by the presence and the babble of the Countess without knowing how to get rid of either. Lady May did not come so often. Her manner, too, was changed. She looked at him as much as ever, but she spoke less; and their confidences on both sides seemed to be at an end. She would stand and watch him painting. If he expressed a wish that anything, however slight, should be altered in his room, or in the hours at which the workmen came or went, though it were a passing fancy and he had not dreamt of its being seriously regarded, still the alteration was made, the wish was carried out. He felt uncomfortable; but with his sense of obligation, which would not rise to gratitude, was mingled a feeling of pity. He was quick enough now to perceive how intense and lasting was the passion which ruled in Lady May. What would happen when she came to know the truth, or, at least, as much of it as the world should ever be acquainted with? She and Hippolyta could never meet again; their paths had crossed once, and once only, then each had gone her way. And he was moving, and should ever move, on the path of Hippolyta. How would the Earl's daughter regard their union, which would of course to her have the semblance of marriage? All depended probably on how it came to her ears. Meanwhile Rupert, wholly delivered from the fancy that she had touched his affection, was so calm, so cold, and so civil, that to one less bent on conquering him the task which May Daveliani had

undertaken would have seemed desperate. Either he was inaccessible by nature, or the conquest was already made—by another. She did not appear to think so. She was wary, attentive, engrossed, letting not a hint escape from her, and watching every expression on his countenance, every slightest accident in the day's proceedings. Rupert felt that it was so; it gave him a great deal of occupation and made existence at Trelingham a penalty. He was not likely to be drawn away from Hippolyta by such an Argus-eyed creature. But he wished there were a Hermes to send her to sleep with his magic-wand.

Among other difficulties, one, which naturally presented itself to a lover, was that of visiting Falside, where he wished to consecrate by devout pilgrimage all the haunts of Hippolyta, making his memory identical with hers and taking to himself the past which she had lived without him. Should he go or not go? It was a serious question. At length he resolved to break the ice. The two ladies and he were standing aloft on a broad scaffold, in front of that picture representing Tristram and Iseult, which as a *tableau vivant* had stirred Hippolyta's jealousy. Rupert, touching the burnished gold of the chalice with his brush, and keeping his eyes on the fresco, said casually, 'I think I shall ride to Falside when I have done this piece of the day's work.'

'To Falside?' exclaimed the Countess, looking aside at Lady May. 'Oh, of course, to go on with your landscape, which, by the bye, we have never seen. What a pity it is that such a picturesque little demesne should be left in the charge of a couple of old servants! It might as well belong to a ghost or a dead man as to Colonel Valence, who is never at home.'

'But Miss Valence takes care of it,' said Rupert, always with his brush in his hand, intent on the shading of the chalice. He kept good control over his voice.

'Dear me!' cried Karina, now looking straight at Lady May and addressing her, 'how odd that Mr. Glanville should not know that Miss Valence has disappeared from Falside!'

'Disappeared!' said the artist boldly. 'What do you

mean, Countess? Is that a term of romance for something very ordinary?'

'Ordinary or extraordinary,' she replied, 'it is true. A few days after you went to London—when was it, May?' interrupting herself suddenly.

'When was what?' said Lady May. 'I can't help you to an answer if you break off in the middle of a sentence.' She was blushing, and the plank on which she stood trembled.

Rupert put out his arm to keep her from falling, and drew her from the edge of the scaffold. 'Take care, Lady May,' he said; 'there is always danger of accident when people begin talking up in the air like this. They forget that they are not on the ground.'

'Thank you,' she said in a low voice, coming nearer to the fresco. She was angry at having betrayed her motion. 'Well, Karina,' she said, recovering herself, 'what were you saying?'

'I was telling Mr. Glanville that Miss Valence had quitted Falside unexpectedly about a week after Cousin Tom's birthday; and that she did not inform us, in the brief note we received, either of her destination or of the causes which led to her sudden departure.'

There was a certain ill-natured emphasis in these formal words which amused Rupert. He thought himself quite a match for Madame de Lutenieff. So he laughed and answered, 'I did not know you were so much in Miss Valence's confidence. Has she been in the habit of notifying her movements and their motives to her feminine acquaintance? And has she really gone?'

'We were not mere acquaintance,' retorted Karina; 'you may remember, Sir Artist, how anxious she was to be received at Trelingham. One might have supposed it was the chief object of her life. And no sooner is she free of the house, than she vanishes into space without a word of explanation either to my cousin or to me, although we were both devotedly fond of her.'

'Don't exaggerate, Karina,' said Lady May from her place near Rupert; 'you were as fond of her as you would be of a new plaything for three days and a half; if she had not gone you would have got tired and found another toy.'

thing before long. As for me, I never pretended to be enthusiastic about Miss Valence. Her wish to put an end to the misunderstanding between papa and Colonel Valence was no doubt amiable. But I could not care for a young lady who held her principles.'

'What sort of principles?' inquired Rupert. He did not feel much attracted to Lady May while she was speaking. She to scorn Hippolyta! It was well for both that he knew how to hold his tongue.

'Oh, dangerous principles enough,' she answered. 'I do not know that I can or ought to describe them; but you may imagine that Colonel Valence would not teach his daughter the maxims of English society.'

'Now *you* are exaggerating,' interrupted the Countess; 'they were not English maxims, I grant. But they were romantic. Do you think, Mr. Glanville,' she went on, 'that there is no morality out of England? Miss Valence, my cousin, and I had a famous dispute on that subject before she went. I agreed with Miss Valence, and we were set down by Lady May as exceedingly naughty. Were we not, May?'

'You misrepresent me,' her cousin answered, 'and you are doing injustice to Miss Valence. But I have no particular pleasure in discussing her views, even if I fully understood them. I am not sorry she has left Falside for what may prove a long time. It was a dangerous and difficult connection, as I saw at the beginning. Not indeed,' she hastened to add, 'that any one was to blame, except Colonel Valence for bringing up his daughter on such a system. I am glad we visited her, and glad the acquaintance is probably over.'

'Did Miss Valence write that she should be away a long while?' asked Rupert.

The Countess replied, 'She spoke of leaving Falside and being uncertain whether she should return. It was a short note—two or three lines in haste, that was all.'

'Something connected with her father's plans, perhaps,' said Rupert; 'he is a great traveller.' It was necessary to find out whether the Countess suspected anything.

'And a great conspirator,' said Madame de Lutenieff. 'I

should like to know him. What an entertaining history he must have lived through, always plotting and going about in disguise for thirty or forty years, like the villain in a play! But we don't know whether Miss Valence followed him from home. She may have gone off with one of those dark Italians that used to be seen at Falside. We did fancy, just for a moment,' pursued this hare-brained young lady—'but of course it was only a joke—that she was not altogether indifferent to—to——' she stopped and looked across at Lady May. But no help came from that quarter. Rupert felt the blood mounting in his cheeks.

'Go on, Countess,' he said resolutely; 'you don't finish your sentences this morning.' His tone of calm indifference disconcerted Madame de Lutenieff, who could not see his face.

'Oh, it was all nonsense,' she said with less spirit than usual; 'but in the country people have nothing to do except to invent stories about their friends. When you left the Court, instead of waiting till Cousin Tom's festival was over, and Miss Valence went away in a hurry, I said to Lady May that perhaps it had been arranged when you were dancing at the dress-ball. But don't be wrathful, Mr. Glanville,' for he had now turned round with the brush in his hand; 'I am never serious, you know, and I meant no harm.'

'Make your mind easy, Countess,' replied the artist; 'I am not likely to be wrathful over a little bit of romance, if I may apply the word as Lady May did just now. When Miss Valence left the ball to meet her father, I had no more notion that she would be quitting Falside in a week than you had. Less, perhaps. And you cannot guess whither she has gone?'

'Not in the least,' said Karina, somewhat crestfallen. She had not shaken Rupert's equanimity; nor was she further advanced on the subject of his relations to Hippolyta. But there was something else to be attempted, and Lady May's leaving the Great Hall when their conversation reached this point gave her the opportunity she longed for. With that engaging openness which, from being really a part of her character, had been submitted without difficulty to cultivation, and was now a weapon of attack and defence,

she contrived to let Rupert know that Tom Davenant had proposed for his cousin's hand, but with the unexpected result which has been already chronicled. 'Unexpected,' went on the innocent Countess, 'for I need not tell you, Mr. Glanville, that Lady May has thereby surrendered, if I should not rather say forfeited, the most splendid prospect. She would have been Countess of Trelingham; she would have continued to live in the home of her childhood, and to have the control of this great property. But I do not blame her, oh no,' she exclaimed with pathetic fervour; 'I can guess the reason, and I admire the constancy with which she has resisted temptation.' Her eyes, though not capable of a deep expression, were searching the artist through and through.

He answered coolly, 'I suppose the reason is not hard to guess. Lady May did not care sufficiently for her cousin, who, if I am not impertinent in saying so, is one of the noblest young men I have come across.' He was returning good for evil, and the Countess smiled. Praise of her *preux chevalier* always melted her.

'Come,' she said, 'let us be friends, Mr. Glanville. I see you do not bear malice. You are right in supposing that Lady May does not care for my Cousin Tom. Shall I be indiscreet if I tell you that that is only half the reason?' And her eyes gleamed brightly.

'I should be indiscreet, perhaps,' was his answer, partly serious and partly ironical, 'if I allowed one lady to betray the thoughts of another; although they do say that is a way they have.'

'For shame, for shame!' she said. 'I shall tell you nothing now, and yet you are dying to hear.' She waited, but he would give her no encouragement.

'I am dying to finish my morning's work,' at last he said. It was hardly courteous, but why would she linger there? He went resolutely at his fresco again.

The Countess thought a little while before setting her foot on the ladder by which she had come up; and then, with a mischievous smile, said to him, 'I see all your ambition lies in your art. It is very natural, as I can testify, being a sort of artist myself. But should it ever take another

direction, not quite so lofty, and yet loftier, come to me for information.' With which enigmatic sentence she descended to the floor of the Hall and went out.

Glanville, I am sorry to say, was anything but grateful; and his comments, delivered under his breath as he went on painting, would have astonished Madame de Lutenieff. For, though dissatisfied with her partial success, she had the witness of a good conscience, and would not have minded explaining to a female confidante the line of conduct she had pursued. There was only one rival in Mr. Tom Davenant's affections whom she feared, and that was Lady May. So long as his cousin remained single, Tom was capable of renewing his offer. Were she married, or engaged, and out of the way, Karina trusted that the young man would have eyes for her own attractions, which were not inconsiderable. She had almost convinced herself that Lady May was in love with the artist; that passionate scene in which Hippolyta had said so little and Lady May had been so vehement was ever present to her fancy; and in the hope of a further unravelling of the threads she, instead of following Mrs. Davenant and her son to London, had waited for Rupert's return. It was all important that he should know the offer had been made and rejected. She would help him to one of the most accomplished and stately of brides. It was of no consequence that Lady May would have to stoop a little in order to marry him, but of the utmost that he should understand she was there, waiting for him to fall on one knee and demand her hand. The Earl would not refuse, and the great danger would be averted. So the Countess reasoned, not foolishly from her point of view. It was a misfortune that Rupert would not accept her confidence, and that Lady May would endure no reference, on her part, to Rupert. How absurdly stiff and straitlaced was the morality of English people! Even that daring Miss Valence had shown extreme reserve in their last interview at Falside, and was now departed on an errand which might have some romance in it, but would be sure after all to end, as English stories did, with perfect propriety. Karina sighed; she was not made for this dull realm. She hoped. when the time came, she should pass

suade Tom to live abroad; not so much at Paris—Paris was not itself under the Third Republic—but at Vienna, Venice, Naples, with an interval once in a way at Monte Carlo. The Countess did not play, but she took great pleasure in looking on while others played.

The development of the drama which she desired to see at Trelingham was, however, interrupted a few days later. The Earl, never very strong, had been ailing for some time, and his physicians, after consultation, ordered him to take the waters at Schwalbach. He was unwilling to go, but they threatened him with the consequences; and Lady May, who was really and devotedly attached to her father, added her persuasion. She would of course accompany him. The Countess thought she might join them later on; and, as Glanville declared that he fully entered into Lord Trelingham's mind on the subject of the decorations, and would write frequently and give ample details of the progress of the work, it was decided that a move should be made. Thus the artist and Mr. Truscombe would be lords of the domain during his absence; but on Glanville's suggesting that he must occasionally quit the Court for other engagements, Lord Trelingham begged him to use all the freedom he might wish. It had been stipulated at the beginning that Rupert should take a fair time over the work and not hurry. When, therefore, he had been some three weeks at the Court, and his impatience to see Hippolyta again was reaching a feverish height, they all, to his infinite content, bade him farewell one fine morning. That afternoon he rode to Falside, and, winning admittance to the library, wrote thence a glowing epistle to Mrs. Malcolm, in which he rejoiced over his new-found liberty, and promised to be at Forrest House within the week.

He kept his word. Three days of unalloyed happiness passed like a flash of summer-lightning, lambent, swift, and beautiful. It seemed to Rupert that Hippolyta had subdued her melancholy. She was adorably candid and child-like, full of pretty fancies and loving conceits, reluctant to let him go, yet comforted with the hope of their union for good and all when the next few months were over. She had found occupation in gardening, and her list of the

neighbouring poor was beginning to fill. Had she gone near an infected house, or exposed herself to danger? No, she answered laughingly; there was no infection within three miles. She had attended one sick-bed, and meant to attend it still, for it had gained her a pleasant intimacy. Further the story did not go. Rupert, too much in love with Hippolyta to hear all she said, hardly waited for the end of the sentence, but was bursting out, in the manner of happy mortals, with praises of her generosity and declarations of his unalterable affection. He went back to Trelingham more in love than ever; and if he did not yield to home-sickness now, it was by dint of incessant occupation.

The story which he would not let Hippolyta finish was pretty in its way. At Falside she had taken pleasure in her garden, and with help from Andres—who loved her as if he had been her mastiff, and took more care of her than she knew—the flower-beds had flourished gaily, and the wilderness above and below the cascade had blossomed like the rose. It was only to be expected that she should turn to the flowers again for consolation when Rupert went away. There was much to be done in the garden of Forrest House, for it had been neglected somewhat since Miss Foljambe's death. But the more there was to do the more Hippolyta was pleased; and every morning saw her in a costume that the work would not spoil, and in gardening gloves, engaged in weeding and trimming borders, and bringing back the straggling plants into some sort of order. The variety of flowers was unusual, and among them were lilies of all kinds, with many old-fashioned bulbs, tulips and hyacinths, which had been preserved in the greenhouse with more care than the rest. Hippolyta wanted no help; but, for the rougher tasks, she might obtain it from the man who looked after the stables—a kind of miscellaneous groom and ostler, who did not sleep on the premises.

She was alone in the garden, then, one pleasant forenoon, binding up some long creepers which had trailed over a bed of calceolarias, when the housekeeper, good Mrs. Leeming, came to her with a request. Might the gardener next door speak to her? 'Next door?' laughing

Hippolyta; 'do you mean at the church?' Mrs. Leeming meant at the church, if it was giving no offence. 'None in the world,' said her mistress; 'why should it?' Well, the housekeeper did not know, but some people were set against Roman Catholics. Not Miss Foljambe, to be sure; that charitable lady had a kind word for all the world. And that was why the gardener came. 'Let him come now, then,' said Mrs. Malcolm, who had not learnt to tolerate servants' long stories. The housekeeper beckoned to a man that, during their short colloquy, had been standing at the gate. He came forward and took off his hat respectfully. He was a fine-looking man of about forty, tall and well made, with a clear glance in his gray eyes, and a good address. The housekeeper said, 'Now, Mr. Dauris, tell Mrs. Malcolm what you want,' which introduction over, she discreetly retired.

Mr. Dauris, thus encouraged, and still more by the expression on Hippolyta's countenance, which was invariably gentle and sympathetic when she came across any of her own class, as she called them, said that he had made bold to come, now Forrest House was let, to beg for some flowers to decorate the altars in St. Cyprian's, of which he was gardener and sacristan. 'But,' he added, 'there is not much of a garden, only narrow strips on the other side of the building, and in a shady corner down by the lane where hardly anything will grow.' He spoke perfectly correct English, without accent either provincial or of Bow Bells, and was indeed one of the many working men that know their native tongue, and are proud of it.

Two sentences were enough to interest Hippolyta. 'You would like me to give you some flowers for your church? I will, with pleasure,' she answered; 'but the garden is in a rather backward condition. Look round and tell me what will suit you best.' He thanked her; and as she walked to the greenhouse, with Mr. Dauris a little way behind, she considered whether he could not tell her something of the neighbourhood and the sick poor whom she was minded to take in charge. She put the question to him.

'Yes, indeed,' he answered, 'I know most of the poor about here. But it is not exactly a poverty-stricken place.

'On this side, along the Hill, you will not find any. You must cross the market and go down into the small streets beyond it, which are beginning to be crowded worse than I remember them. Our own people live there mostly. But it doesn't matter which door you open; you will find suffering and sin inside. The fathers at St. Cyprian's are there day and night; and I often hear them say that they can do no good. I don't wonder at it, seeing how the people are compelled to live.'

'No, nor do I,' said Hippolyta sorrowfully. And she was abiding within these golden gates, with every luxury at command, a garden and a palace to afford her pleasure at all hours, and neither care nor trouble! How were these things to be reconciled? She must not dwell on them. It could do no good just then.

'What made you come to me for flowers?' she asked, by way of turning the conversation, while she cut the best she could find.

Mr. Dauris, taking with a smile the bunch she held out to him, answered, 'I thought you might be like Miss Foljambe, who was very good to us and sent in flowers every Saturday for the Lady altar. She was not a Catholic; but she used to say that flowers were of God's religion, and could do nothing but good to anybody.

'She was very right,' exclaimed Hippolyta, pleased with this saying of the lady in whose shadow she dwelt all day. It was like making her acquaintance, though dead. 'She was very right, indeed. A Spanish poet says, "Flowers are the thoughts of everlasting love." I will send you some for the Lady altar every Saturday; and lest I should forget, will you come to me next Saturday morning?'

'I shall be much pleased to do so,' replied the gardener, going away. 'But I beg your pardon,' he resumed, in a less cheerful tone, 'next Saturday I must take my poor wife, if she is well enough, to the infirmary'—he named one at a distance—'where the doctors have promised to see what they can do for her.'

'Is your wife very ill, then?' inquired Hippolyta. 'You did not mention her when I was asking you about the sick in the neighbourhood.'

'She has been ill this long while,' he said; 'but we are not in want, thank God. I earn a good income as a gardener—not here at St. Cyprian's,' he continued smiling, 'the fathers could not afford it; but a few doors down when you pass Church Lane. Our cottage is at the end of the lane.'

'But I should like very much to be of service to your wife, if I could,' said Hippolyta eagerly. 'What is the matter with her?'

'We call it a weak chest; but I am afraid it is more serious. The doctor tells me—however, I keep it from my wife, so please don't mention it, for fear it should frighten her—that one lung is quite gone and the other affected. She is obliged to lie down a good deal with pains in her head and back.'

'Poor thing, poor thing,' exclaimed Hippolyta; 'how sad for you both! Have you any children?'

'Two little boys,' he answered, 'and a girl. Annie is grown up, she is seventeen.'

'And is she at home? She ought to be a good help to her mother.'

'She is generally at home,' was the reply. 'She has been in service, but we did not like it for her. It was in a lady's house near Dorset Square.' The tone in which he spoke implied some dissatisfaction, either with Annie or with domestic service in general.

'Well, I am glad you have told me,' said Hippolyta; 'and do you think Mrs. Dauris would like me to come and see her?'

'Surely she would, if you were so kind; and I should like it too. But we are not in want of anything, thank God,' he repeated, 'and we would not take your time from those that are.'

'Oh, I will find time,' she answered cheerfully; 'may I come this afternoon, or will it be too soon? I could come to-morrow, in that case.'

'I will tell my wife at dinner-time,' he said, and you will be welcome at any hour. In the afternoon she does not suffer so much from headache.'

It was arranged accordingly. The gardener took his flowers and withdrew; and Hippolyta, roused at the antici-

pation of having an object for her benevolence, went on weeding and pruning with great animation. She did not know how tired she had been all this while of living like the sleeping beauty in the wood, alone in Elfland, with nothing to do, and her prince travelling in the distance or painting pictures at Trelingham Court. She ate her luncheon with more appetite, and counted the minutes till it was time for walking out. Mr. Dauris had told her how to find the cottage. It was less than a quarter of a mile from Forrest House, at the end of the rambling lane which led by the side of St. Cyprian's, and past detached dwellings with large gardens between them, into the more open country. Rupert and Hippolyta had driven that way once, but she had not observed the gardener's little house, although it might have drawn the attention of a lover of flowers, for it was embowered in honeysuckle and clematis.

She did not go there direct, but wandered about the countrified paths, under the shade of the great trees which made all that neighbourhood pleasant. Her thoughts were not sombre, as they had been. The conviction of fearless innocence, which in other days had allowed her to roam unattended, with Fancy for her sole companion, was strong within her. It was early in the afternoon, and the sun and the flowers were equally brilliant, when she stopped at the cottage-gate. She saw in front of her a two-storied house, standing back from the gravel pathway, on the edge of a triangular piece of turf which represented, no doubt, a more extensive village-green, now discommoned and taken in by the private dwellings scattered around. In front of Mr. Dauris's cottage were garden-beds, abounding in well-assorted hues, and, as was evident, carefully tended. The little porch in the middle was overrun with clematis; and when Hippolyta arrived the door stood open, giving a view of the passage beyond, with its strip of cocoa-nut matting. The green pailings matched the green shutters, made like Venetian blinds, which adorned the windows on either side of the porch. It seemed a little nest of happiness, bright and warm, sunshine without and comfort within. 'There is sickness within, too,' said the compassionate Hippolyta,

as she lifted the latch and went up the bit of walk which led to the front door. While she stood there, looking for bell or knocker, a little boy came running round the corner of the house from the garden behind. He was out of breath, and stopped when he saw the lady, a stranger to him. What a pretty boy he looked! The fairest of fair hair, hanging about his shoulders in ringlets, large laughing gray eyes, a face ruddy and white with pouting rosy lips, and his little frame panting with innocent life which mantled in blushes on his cheeks. He seemed between five and six, a sturdy boy, wearing his sailor's dress of dark blue with the pride which attends new clothes in children. After standing still and looking for a moment, he came up confidently. 'Do you want mother?' he inquired, 'because she is in that room,' pointing across to the open window on the other side of the porch. Hippolyta was very fond of children. She smiled and held out her hand, into which he put his own with great docility.

'I daresay it is your mother I want,' she answered, 'but first tell me who you are?'

'I am Willie,' he said. Children seldom give you the whole of their name at once.

'Willie what?' asked the strange lady.

'Willie Dauris,' he answered, with an impatient shake of his curls. 'Come in and see mother. You want mother.' He was very clear on that point, and evidently looked on a cross-examination of himself as time wasted. Hippolyta laughed, and still keeping hold of Willie's hand, knocked at the door on her right. A low voice answered 'Come in,' and Willie pushing open the door, Hippolyta followed.

The little boy, acting as master of the ceremonies, ran across the room where some one was lying on a large and comfortable-looking couch, propped up with pillows. 'The lady wants to see you, mother,' he said, beginning to climb on the couch. His mother motioned him to be still, and holding him with a thin white hand, turned her head towards Hippolyta, and said in a low but very taking voice, 'Are you Mrs. Malcolm?'

Hippolyta started at the sound of the name. She an-

swered falteringly, 'I—I told Mr. Dauris this morning that I should like to come and see you. He mentioned that you were not well. Did he say I was coming?'

'Yes,' replied the invalid; 'he told me you would be so kind. You are very welcome, very welcome indeed. Willie, get Mrs. Malcolm a chair, and put it here,' pointing to a place near the couch. 'I lose my voice almost,' she went on, 'when the pain keeps on, and my hearing too. Did you ring?'

'No,' said Hippolyta; 'I was on the point of ringing when your boy—when Willie came. He tells me his name is Willie.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Dauris; 'he is called after his father. He is our youngest. He will be six on the Assumption. A beautiful birthday for him, isn't it?'

Hippolyta was puzzled by the expression till she had thought a little. 'Oh,' she said, 'the Assumption of the Virgin, a festival of your religion. Yes, I suppose you would like that. And are you feeling better this afternoon? Your voice is quite clear and distinct.'

'A little better,' answered Mrs. Dauris. 'I hope to be so on Saturday and to go with my husband to the infirmary. It is a long way, but he can borrow a conveyance, he thinks.'

Hippolyta, delighted with the opportunity, offered her little carriage and insisted with affectionate firmness on its acceptance. She was already pleased with Mrs. Dauris, even as she had been with her husband. The light which fell upon the couch from the open window showed the invalid to be a woman of uncommon beauty, with delicate regular features, flushing when she spoke or looked at her visitor. She seemed tall and slender, so far as could be judged from her reclining position, for, as she explained to Hippolyta, she was unable to rise, much less to do any household work, that afternoon. 'The dinner things,' she said, 'are lying on the table waiting for Annie to clear them away. It is a great trial to me, for I was an active young woman, and I never thought to have suffered from this complaint. It is not in my father's or mother's family. But God's will be done.'

'I saw Annie,' said the little boy, with the brevity of his age.

His mother looked at him uneasily. 'Where did you see her, my darling?' she inquired.

'I don't know,' he said slowly, as if there was nothing more to be added. And then, after being silent for a minute or two, he chanted again in his pretty recitative, 'I saw Annie in the lane. She was talking to a gentleman. She cried. She said I was to go in. But I stayed in the garden.'

Mrs. Dauris looked agitated. Her hands trembled, and she said, 'That will do, my dear. Next time your sister tells you to come in, you must be obedient.'

Willie crept close to his mother. 'Have I been naughty?' he asked. 'What makes me naughty, mother?' The tears stood in her eyes, and Hippolyta could not help pitying her. She felt there was some sad story behind; and though not wishing to indulge curiosity, she would have given much to express the compassion that rose in her heart. An inspiration came to her. With the engaging smile which so often hovered about her lips, a mixture of kindliness and pity, she drew near to Mrs. Dauris, and said:

'I fear I am taking a great liberty, but if you do not mind, since your daughter is not here just now, I should be so glad to do anything you want. Let me put the room straight for you.'

'Oh no, you must not do that,' said Mrs. Dauris, eyeing her visitor with a good deal of astonishment, but with affection also. 'You are a lady, and it is not fit work for you.'

Hippolyta was quite at home in this sort of encounter. 'Never mind if I am a lady,' she replied; 'I have not lost the use of my hands. I can assure you that I am an adept in washing dishes.' And without more ado, in spite of the earnest and good-natured remonstrances of Mrs. Dauris, she laid aside her cloak, drew hot and cold water with the aid of Willie, who pointed out where everything was, but dispensed as far as possible with speaking, and was soon busy in remedying the disorder she had found on her arrival.

It was not a difficult task, and she enjoyed it thoroughly. When all was done she insisted that the invalid should now try to eat something. There was no resisting her; and the poor consumptive patient made a better meal than she had done for a long while. When it was over they talked a little, and Hippolyta hoped that Annie might come in. But there was no sign of her, and she rose to go. Mrs. Dauris clasped her hand with fervent gratitude; Willie clung to her skirts, and was undecided whether to stay with his mother and cry, or to follow the lady to her unknown abode. She kissed the child, made Mrs. Dauris promise again to avail herself of the carriage, and went home in that healthy state of mind which is the consequence of any little effort done with simple intent, to be of service to another. About Annie, the girl of seventeen, whom her brother had seen talking to a gentleman and crying, she was, it must be admitted, curious. But her curiosity was in no sense equal to her sympathy.

Thus began an acquaintance which ripened ere long into friendship on both sides. Mr. Dauris, when informed by his wife of the circumstances of Hippolyta's visit, was at first indignant that she should have been allowed to stoop so low in her great kindness, and ended by conceiving towards her an enthusiastic respect which bordered on veneration. She was so young, so beautiful, and so unaffectedly gracious; she had such a delicate regard for their privacy, and was so timid in making advances, that in his own mind he did not know whether to call her an angel disguised in weeds of flesh, or a modest maiden whose ignorance concealed from her the humility of her behaviour. She seemed neither humble nor proud; all she did was with her a matter of course. She asked his opinion about other things than flowers, played with Willie and Charlie,—the elder boy, who had been at school on the occasion of her first visit,—sat for many hours by the side of the invalid, and ministered even more effectually to her sympathies than to her bodily wants. Hippolyta was soon recognised as a frequent and favoured visitor. When her hand was on the latch out came the boys, running to greet her, but making as little noise as they could, not to disturb their mother. In the

evening she would sit with husband and wife instead of spending the hours after dinner in her solitary room; and she heard many a good word from the lips of both. She loved and admired their simple goodness. They made no inquiries either as to her religious beliefs or her story; they did not even mention Mr. Malcolm's name. This was not due to suspicion; it was native delicacy. The young lady did not speak of her husband, and they would not make so free as to begin.

CHAPTER XXV

NEC DIVERSA TAMEN, QUALEM DECET ESSE SORORUM

SOME time elapsed before she came across Annie Dauris. But when she was passing down Church Lane in the dusk one evening, on her way to the cottage, she observed a tall young man standing close to the hedge where a wide-spreading beech almost hid him from view, and near him on the farther side a girl whose shawl was drawn half over her face, but the accent of whose voice, though Hippolyta could make out nothing of what she said, was unmistakably like Mrs. Dauris's. The young man was not of the working-class. He was well dressed and had a supercilious air; while Annie Dauris, if she it was, clung to his arm with what appeared to be the vehemence of affection or exasperation. He heard her with impatience; flung away her hand, turned to go, but, seeing Hippolyta coming along at a little distance, went back to where he had left his companion. Both of them waited, loitering in the shade with faces averted till Hippolyta had passed by. It was not difficult to guess that they had been quarrelling, and were ashamed to be seen. Annie Dauris was never at home when Hippolyta called, and it was unlikely that she should have recognised in a casual figure passing down the lane one of whose face she could have no knowledge.

Hippolyta found the gardener and his wife sitting by the open window enjoying the evening air, which was warm and genial. It was one of Mrs. Dauris's good days, when she felt free from headache and could do the light work of the house. Charlie, a bright, fair-haired boy of eleven, was learning his lessons in the garden, sometimes coming up to

the window to show what he had done to his father, and at other times dropping his book and looking out dreamily on the darkening sky, his imagination full of those strange fresh thoughts and fancies which are seldom written in our too elderly volumes for children. Willie had been put to bed. There was a great stillness in the air, and it had a soothing influence on them as they sat talking in low tones. While they were thus engaged the door opened, and some one came in. Mrs. Dauris looked up. 'Oh, it is you, Annie,' she said. 'We are very dark here. Will you bring the lamp?' Annie, without speaking a word, went out again and returned in a few moments with the light, which she set down upon a table, and then stationed herself at some distance from Hippolyta, in such a position that she could examine the visitor's face at her leisure. When she recognised the stranger that had passed along the lane an hour since, she blushed crimson and turned her head away. She bore a striking resemblance to her mother,—the same delicate and regular features, the same bright eyes, the same slender make and upright figure. But the general expression of her countenance was by no means the same. It was ill-tempered and passionate; there was an obstinate look about the mouth; and, for the first time in her life, Hippolyta found herself applying the word 'brazen' to a woman's forehead. She could not have told the reason; was it the swelling surface above the eyebrows which made an impression as of sullen obstinacy and want of shame? But Annie was blushing now; she appeared to be feeling confusion as well as surprise. Mr. Dauris, who had not stirred at her entrance, moved his chair round, and said, 'Annie, come and pay your respects, like a good girl, to Mrs. Malcolm, who has taken such care of your mother.' Annie seemed uncertain whether she would obey or not, but with deliberate slowness she got up from where she was sitting and came forward. Hippolyta held out her hand. She felt for the girl. Annie returned her glance suspiciously, but did not refuse the offered greeting. 'You have never seen my daughter before,' said Mrs. Dauris, 'but I daresay you would have known her in the street if you had. William says she is so like me when we first married.' There was

much affection in the mother's voice; not anger or coldness, which, under the circumstances, might have seemed more natural. Hippolyta did not know what to reply. But with as much gentleness as she could command, she answered, 'No, I never saw your daughter till this evening. But you are right in saying I should recognise the likeness. I did so at once when I was on my way hither, and Annie was walking outside.'

The girl looked frightened, and did not speak one word, waiting for the end of Mrs. Malcolm's revelations. What might have been the consequence had Hippolyta gone on with her story it is impossible to say. She judged it, however, expedient not to add anything. They knew their daughter's habits, as was evident from Willie's exclamations on the day of her first visit; neither did it become her to cast a slur upon conduct which, even if it had no justification, in some particulars might resemble her own. She contented herself with putting a question or two, while Annie kept a determined silence, on the kind of service in which she had lived and her special accomplishments. Annie told her at last that she was fond of dressmaking and wanted to go back, not to Dorset Square, but to a shop near Oxford Street, where she had been admitted to the sight of fashionable robe-making when about fifteen. From that establishment, as Hippolyta learned by and by, her father had removed her, and she had then gone into domestic service. 'If all you want is to learn dressmaking,' said Mrs. Malcolm, 'I can give you some instruction myself, and you would be able to take care of your mother at the same time. Would you like to come and see me at Forrest House? I have leisure on one or two days a week. What do you think, Mrs. Dauris? Do you approve?' Husband and wife were perfectly willing; but Mr. Dauris subjoined, 'Annie must say her own word in the matter, or she may think we are forcing her. Now, my girl, which would you prefer—to go with Mrs. Malcolm, or to stay at home as you have been doing?' She did not give a direct answer, but said, as if it was the same thing, 'I should like to learn dressmaking.' And Hippolyta thought it best to leave the matter so. In her own mind she said that

Annie would be none the worse for learning, as she certainly should if she came to Forrest House, that her present attire was showy and not at all in good taste. Mrs. Dauris always looked neat and simple in her cotton gown; but her daughter assumed a tawdry style, which would have been expensive, could she have afforded it, and heightened her bold, shameless air. Had she not been so pretty, the whole appearance of the child, for she was nothing else, would have been exceedingly painful. She was like a tainted flower. Where had she gained that early acquaintance with vice and finery? Not at home, as was evident. Perhaps there was yet a chance of teaching her better things. Intractable and sullen though she was, a little incident which happened when Hippolyta was going showed that her feelings were not wholly perverted. 'Good-night' had been said on both sides, and their visitor was passing through the gate, when she heard a step behind her, and turning saw Annie, who had followed unperceived. 'Well, my dear?' said Mrs. Malcolm kindly. Annie laid a furtive hand upon her dress, much in the fashion of a child who wants to whisper something, and said with a downcast look, 'Will you let me come to-morrow for the dressmaking, in the afternoon?' Hippolyta assured her of a hearty welcome; and the girl went on, forcing the words, which did not seem to flow easily from her lips. 'I like you; it was good of you not to tell my father what you saw, and not to ask me about it.' And when she had said this she let go Hippolyta's dress, and went in again without waiting for an answer.

She did come next day; but some time elapsed before Hippolyta could win her confidence. It was during this interval that Rupert returned. While he stayed there was no time to instruct Annie or to call at the cottage. She did not mention the story to Rupert again; they had their own romance to talk over, and the possibilities of the future to forecast. And so it continued. Whenever, consistently with his engagements, the artist could run up to London for a few days, he would spend an hour or two at his own house, arranging papers and seeing those who would have been surprised or offended were he to overlook their

claims; but no sooner were these formalities complied with than he vanished into space, and Hippolyta had him to herself at Forrest House. They were wonderfully happy.

Meanwhile her interest in the gardener's family continued. The boys, not altogether with Mrs. Leeming's goodwill, were allowed to play about the grounds of the red brick mansion, where no child had been since Glanville himself had paid those dreary visits to Miss Atterbury which he was glad not to remember. But Willie and Charlie, though they could not help doing mischief in their primeval innocence, were very amusing, affectionate, and original, helping Hippolyta with the flowers, wheeling barrows of earth or dead leaves, which they occasionally overset on the pathway to their own extreme delight, and making believe that they were elves in enchanted places, or young princes in search of adventures under the trees of the forest into which they transformed the garden to give themselves larger scope. They were great favourites with Mrs. Malcolm, whom they worshipped and followed everywhere. But being shy and well brought up, they did not presume on her favour; and if she told them there was a border they must not dig up, or a room they were not to enter, Charlie not only observed the command himself, but took especial care that Willie, who was younger and more volatile, should not forget it. 'Mrs. Malcolm said not,' was their law of the Medes and Persians which might not be altered. On Saturdays they carried between them the flowers which Hippolyta destined for the church, to their father. It was part of their play to repeat, with childish treble pipe and most naïve turns of speech, the legends of the Catholic saints which they had been taught at school; and their kind protectress, whose presence did not terrify them nor check their harmless babble, listened with more pleasure than she could have supposed to their fantastic stories. But they were instinct with a life and colour which for the moment gave them something like the air of reality. It was like viewing the painted windows from the inside, where the legend came out plain and the figures seemed more human. Both the boys would be story-tellers in turn; and Willie's slow but vivid imagination, which

wrought confusion in the history, made him one of the most lovable and laughable of little creatures. Charlie, however, had more feeling. He returned Mrs. Malcolm's affection ardently, and though he was too big at eleven to be hanging on a lady's skirts, as Willie often did, you might be sure that, if Hippolyta were within reach, he would not be far off. Did she leave her hat, or cloak, or gloves on the table, he liked to steal up when he thought no one was looking and to touch them fondly. One thing surprised the religious boy, for such he was, why Mrs. Malcolm never went to St. Cyprian's like his father—and his mother when she was well. On a certain Saturday, when she had made up the flowers into bouquets and put them into the children's hands, as they were going Charlie stopped and, fixing his beautiful eyes on Hippolyta, said to her, 'Won't you come and see them on the altar? They look prettiest there, and they smell so sweet in church.'

'No, darling,' said Hippolyta with a slight feeling of sadness, 'not now, I am busy. Some other time, perhaps.' The boys ran off; but she repeated mechanically to herself, 'Some other time, some other time! Ought I to have said that? I shall not go to see the flowers on the altar, let them look ever so pretty.'

Their sister was quite different. She did not enter St. Cyprian's either; she seemed to have little or none of the religious instinct; and when Willie and Charlie ran and jumped in the garden, she did not join them. Hippolyta was almost too considerate towards the girl, letting her spend long afternoons in the house, and showing her everything that she thought would interest her. Annie had never seen such treasures before; they took hold of her fancy mightily, and she was eager to learn the objects and uses of the multiplied curiosities in which the old mansion abounded. She gave careful attention to every word that fell from Hippolyta in illustration of the pictures, china, and the ten thousand knick-knacks which were necessarily not to be comprehended without a gloss by the gardener's daughter. She studied Mrs. Malcolm's way of speaking, and expended thought not only on the patterns of dress which were given her to cut out, but likewise on those

which were worn by her teacher. Not without a sense of amusement, though with keener feelings of compassion, did Hippolyta observe that she seemed to be going over in her mind a part to be hereafter acted; to be rehearsing, as it were, the manners and mode of speech that characterised 'a lady.' She was equally bold in imitation and timid in putting questions; but there was evidently a multitude of things belonging to this novel sphere that she thirsted to inquire about. Hippolyta, seeming not to mind, let her have her way. Annie began to talk more freely, to give expression to some of her less dangerous inclinations. She was not exactly ignorant or dull, but the first steps in mounting from one's native regions are the most difficult, and she dreaded to set Mrs. Malcolm against her. Little by little, however, the nature of the girl discovered itself.

There was nothing uncommon, except her lovely features, and they were half spoilt by her sullen look, in Annie Dauris. Between her and thousands of other London-bred girls there reigned an unmistakable family likeness; but Hippolyta, in spite of her reading and travels, did not know it, and this, the first specimen she had seen, filled her with dislike and amazement. Mr. Dauris sent his boys to the school which was carried on by the fathers at St. Cyprian's, and his girl to the convent. But there was another school which he could not prevent them from frequenting if they chose—that of the children who played with them, and of the London streets. Annie—but I think Mrs. Dauris can begin the story better than I. She had lived through it all. Sitting up on her couch, and pausing from time to time when her breath failed her, she unburdened herself of this great trouble to the young married lady one morning, when Annie was ironing in the little back-kitchen and not likely to interrupt them.

'It shames me,' she said, 'to speak about such things in the hearing of a lady like you; but Annie is not the child she was, and you ought to know her ways. I don't know what came over her when she got to be a big girl. She was as good a child as you would wish to see, and the sisters were very fond of her, till she was twelve or thirteen. And then she took up with some of the bad characters in

the school, and she was always going about with them at night instead of coming home, staying in the street, and staring into public-houses, and seeing what it was not right for her to see. I spoke to her often enough, God knows, but as soon as my back was turned away she would go, and not be home again till midnight perhaps, or later. I was afraid William would notice it; for, though he is a peaceable, religious man, as you may see, he can be very angry, and once he gives way to his feeling I am afraid of what will happen. He did go after her once, and she was obstinate and would not come in; it was when they were holding a fair in the market,—she said no, she had rather stay out all night; and William took her and brought her home, and that time he beat her severely. Oh, dear me, I shall never, never forget it. And it did no good; she was worse than ever. Many an hour I spent in search of her during the dark winter nights, when she would slip out and run off to her bad companions. And where did I find her, after all? Standing at the bar of a gin palace, talking and laughing with grown men, or coming out of one of the low theatres in the neighbourhood. When she saw me she ran away or hid round a corner, and I have had to come home through rain and snow without Annie. My husband told me it was madness, that I should only kill myself; but I had the feelings of a mother, and I could not see my child lost. It is a wonder that she never got into worse mischief, for the men and the women she made friends of were thieves, and well known to the police. I cannot tell where she found a shelter the nights she stayed out. She would never say, and she seemed not to care. One night she would have spent in the station-house, for she was taken there with others that had been drinking and fighting; but the sergeant knew my husband, and instead of taking down the charge, he sent round, like a good man, for William, and her father brought her home. That struck a wholesome fear into her during a week or two; and then she went away again. We were at our wit's end what to do with her. Isn't it a pitiful tale, Mrs. Malcolm?' she said, turning with wet eyes to Hippolyta, whose silence had deepened with her sympathy and horror. She could not

speak, but she pressed the poor mother's hand. There was a painful pause.

'I don't believe,' resumed Mrs. Dauris, when she recovered her breath, 'that there was malice in Annie. She was young and curious; she had no sense of danger, and of course she liked to see what was going on. That is how we poor people lose our children. They go into the streets and the flood carries them away. We are not the only ones in this neighbourhood that have had trouble with a daughter and shed scalding tears over her ruin. Though, I thank God, Annie is not ruined yet. She has lost her character with the sisters, and the people about think she has behaved like the rest of her bad companions. But, Mrs. Malcolm, it is not true. I give you the word of a mother that there is not a word of truth in it. Annie will not be said or led by her father, more is the pity; and when he is at home she will not open her mouth, as you saw the other night. The poor child is afraid of him since he beat her, and she is stiff-necked too, and no one can manage her. I do sometimes coax her to talk, and then she tells me things. William doesn't know that Maurice Regan has been near the cottage, and I would not have him know. But Annie confessed it when I repeated what her brother said about a gentleman in the lane.'

'Oh, indeed,' exclaimed Hippolyta; 'then Maurice Regan is the gentleman's name. *Is* he a gentleman?'

Yes, he was a gentleman, and he had seen Annie walking home to her Cousin Harriet's from Mark Tomlinson the draper's near Oxford Street; and he had fallen desperately in love with her. It was the most ordinary of 'London idylls'—gutter-idylls, one should call them perhaps. While Mrs. Dauris went on with the shameful story Hippolyta seemed to hear it all in a dream. The great workroom, with its rows of workers; the elder girl, Charlotte Fraser, who had 'taken a fancy to Annie,' and showed her fine sights, leading her to music halls, where there was comic singing, with plenty to eat and drink, and nothing for Annie to pay; the well-dressed gentleman that was a friend of Charlotte's, and gave her up to walk with the younger girl he met in her company; the first fit of

intoxication, when the mother, going after Annie, saw her with eyes 'at first full of wild fire, and then as full of sleep and stupidity'; and the second and the third fit, when a stranger passing along noticed the child of fifteen lying outside the tavern insensible, with a crowd standing about her; the midnight scenes, when her father and mother went searching over London for their lost daughter; the flights from home, the recaptures, the hopeless efforts on the part of this good lady and that to bring her to a better mind; and at last, the trembling fear of the poor mother, declining every day to her grave, but dreading that Annie would break away from home once more and cast herself upon the London streets;—it was a horrible chapter of existence, more like nightmare than reality.

But it was also, for Hippolyta Valence, like holding up a blurred and crooked mirror to her own countenance. The distorted features came back, her own and not her own, as if she beheld them under the oppression of delirium. Why should the sentiment of guilt or shame stir within her bosom, at the thought of Annie Dauris's unmaidenly history? There existed no kinship, how remote soever, between them. But the caricature of love was hideously grotesque; its surroundings were so vile and mean. The streets with their flaring, murky lamps; the horrible, glittering gin palaces; the throng of men and women in rags or in flaunting colours that were ever in motion, in and out through the half-open doors; the rainy nights, when mud was lying thick in the gutters and the spouts were running with foul water, and along the dark and noisome pathways went to and fro the miscellaneous company of women with their draggled garments and shameless, miserable, wrinkled faces, while their partners in vice reeled along, drunken and riotous, in the full tide of debauch,—all this, which came before her suddenly like a stage built up and illuminated from end to end in the depth of darkness, was it indeed the realisation of that dream of free love wherein she had delighted as in a thing most beautiful and tender? Was this the breathing out of pure affection, the blending of heart with heart, the springing up of amaranthine flowers from our mortal mould? At a glance she seemed to take

in the existence of such a girl as Annie Dauris,—the withering of its innocence and beauty, the stubborn rage, and unfulfilled desire, and ever-renewed thirst for what was forbidden. 'Oh, horrible, horrible,' she said beneath her breath. It made her sick and faint to think of it.

Mrs. Dauris had not finished speaking when 'Hush!' said Hippolyta, 'I hear a noise this way. 'Isn't Annie coming from the back-kitchen?' They stopped to listen, and the girl entered, with a number of her favourite weekly novelette in her hand.

'I have done ironing,' she said. 'Will you let me sit here? it is so hot near the ironing-stove.' Her face was flushed with the heat, but she looked less ill-tempered than usual. She was certainly pretty, with a sweet expression, something like her brother Charlie's, just then.

'What are you reading?' said Hippolyta; 'may I look?' She surrendered her novelette doubtingly. It was not badly printed, but rejoiced in illustrations of a most pronounced crudeness and vulgarity, which appeared on the reverse of the thin paper; and its title was—but there is no reason why the title, though merely high-sounding and silly, should be advertised here. It used to glare from London hoardings in great red and green letters, for the delectation of the passing multitude not so many years ago, although it is now rarely to be met with—at least that is my experience—even in catalogues of second-hand rubbish. About a hundred and four numbers compose this sort of tale, which affects the dramatic suddenness and mysterious endings of Eugène Sue, dashed with the sentiment of Mr. G. W. M. Reynolds. There is a whole library of such fiction scattered broadcast by our freedom of the press. Hippolyta, better acquainted with Sophocles than with the purveyors of 'romance for the million,' turned over the pages in silent disgust, and gave them back without remark. Mrs. Dauris, meanwhile, said to Annie with her accustomed gentleness:

'You can come and sit here in a few moments, my dear, when Mrs. Malcolm and I have finished what we are saying. There is something I want to tell the lady.'

'About me, I suppose,' returned Annie with great quick-

ness, her cheeks lighting up and then turning pale; 'well, I don't care. Tell as much as you like, and I will tell my side of the story if I am asked.' And away she went, attempting, for the sake of bravado, to hum the notes of a comic street-song under her breath, but not succeeding in getting through it. On the contrary, when she reached the back-kitchen again and sat down by the ironing-board, such a sense of wretchedness overcame the unhappy girl that she burst into a fit of sobbing, and rocked herself to and fro in agony. She was miserable indeed; far more so than she would have dared to let her mother know or any human creature.

But, a few days later, she told as much of 'her own side of the story' as she judged expedient, sitting in Mrs. Malcolm's boudoir, and in answer to the question which that lady put to her in the words, 'Tell me, Annie, who is Mr. Maurice Regan?'

'Ah, mother told you his name that afternoon I was ironing, when she wouldn't let me sit in the parlour,' cried Annie; 'but I should have told you myself, all the same. Maurice Regan is the gentleman you saw me talking with. He is—I mean—I am——'

She was confused and could get no further. Hippolyta came to her aid.

'You mean to say he is your lover. But when I passed you were quarrelling, I thought.'

Annie looked down at her work. 'Yes, we were,' she said; 'but it was only a lovers' quarrel. Maurice adores me, and I adore him.'

'And was he asking you to do something you didn't like?' inquired Mrs. Malcolm, who thought she had better let Annie tell the story her own way, piecemeal.

'No, it was not that,' replied the girl. 'I wanted him to take me away. I did,' she repeated, as if in answer to the look of sorrow and astonishment on the lady's countenance. 'I hate staying at home. Father makes it so miserable. And I hate him,' she concluded vehemently.

Hippolyta put her hand on the wicked lips of the child, saying softly, 'My dear, my dear, don't utter such wrong words. Your father is a good man, and he loves you.'

'Why did he beat me then?' cried Annie in a shrill voice, pushing away the gentle hand which would fain have stilled her irreverence. 'He shall not have the chance of beating me long, I can tell him.' She spoke loud, as if there was some one in the next room that would hear what she said. Hippolyta was more grieved than shocked. How to bring back so wayward a being to the sense of duty?

'I suppose,' she said after a pause, when Annie had had time to reflect, and had begun to fear the consequences of speaking out loud in such a grand room and before such a fine lady as Mrs. Malcolm, 'I suppose your father wanted to break you off being out late at night, in the streets. You cannot blame him for that.'

'Yes, I can,' said Annie, her spirit rising again; 'I wasn't doing anything. Why shouldn't I go about like other girls, instead of moping indoors? If I had always kept in the house I shouldn't have come to know a soul at Cousin Harriet's. Maurice says father was cruel to beat me, and he hates him too.'

'But why do you like running about after dark, Annie?' It was Hippolyta's purpose to probe as deeply, and yet as delicately as she could, into the mind of this rebellious creature, and to discover, if possible, a remedy for the unhappiness she was causing herself and others. Annie did not hesitate. She replied:

'I do like it, and I always did. If I stay with father and mother, it is all reading good books and talking as the priest does in church. I cannot stand it. I like doing as I like. Why should I be different from the other girls? They talk and sing and dance with their young men, and go to music halls, and they have nice things to eat and drink, and some of them don't work at all——' She stopped. She was going a step too far in her confidences, as she could perceive, being quick enough in her way, by the growing paleness of Mrs. Malcolm's cheek.

'Yes,' said Hippolyta in a low voice, 'there are thousands that never put their hand to anything useful. Would you wish to be one of them, you poor ignorant child?' She turned a wistful glance towards Annie. That young lady, but little abashed, made answer:

'I need not be one of them, if I can get Maurice to take me with him. He has plenty of money and a beautiful house, with servants, and horses, and carriages——'

'Then you have seen the house?' said Mrs. Malcolm, interrupting her; 'and it was there you went when your father and mother lost you, before Miss Thatchford took you into her service?' While she spoke Annie was listening attentively, but she would not answer for some time. She seemed to be turning over a resolution in her mind. Once and again she studied the lady's expression with a sharpness beyond her years, until at last, being apparently satisfied, she said somewhat less impetuously than usual:

'If you would not let anybody know that I asked, I should like—oh, you are such a good lady, I know you will help a poor girl in distress. It is no use telling father or mother, it will only make things worse. Do let me say it all to you, in confidence, as if I was going to confession. Please, will you, ma'am?' She was very imploring. Hippolyta considered. Annie would keep her secret, as she had kept it hitherto, unless the promise was made that it should go no further. And might it not be the girl's salvation for one of her own sex to become in this way her guardian?

'Very well,' said Hippolyta at length. 'I promise not to repeat what you are going to say, unless it is the only way to save you from the danger you have run into.'

'It will not be the only way,' she replied, 'as you will see when I give you the account. But you do promise?' Hippolyta repeated the assurance. Annie became very thoughtful, and broke down several times in trying to begin. It was with great difficulty that at last she said in a broken voice:

'When you saw me and Maurice we *were* quarrelling. I own it now, because I want some one to help me so badly. He went away in a passion, and I haven't—I haven't seen him since, and I don't know where he lives, and it is like being alive and yet screwed down in a coffin to live as I have been living all these weeks.' She gasped for breath and words failed her, as she put down the skirt

she was working upon in a helpless way. She looked not only miserable, but ill and feverish.

'But surely,' said Hippolyta, moved with great commiseration towards her, and forgetting the circumstances which would have seemed to make this turn of events desirable, 'if he loves you, he will come again.'

'I don't know, I don't know,' sobbed Annie. 'He did come, twice, to see me in the lane, and when he began each time he was ever so kind and affectionate; but he got angry as soon as I asked him to take me from my wretched home. He said he was not ready, and I ought to wait and not be such a trouble. And then, when I began to press him a good deal more, he was so out of temper that he turned his back and walked away as fast as possible, and he would not come back when I called and ran after him. And he does not write or anything. What shall I do?' she cried wildly. 'If I cannot find him again I shall go clean out of my mind.'

'And you have no address, no means of writing to him?' inquired Mrs. Malcolm, her heart touched at the sight of distress which it had evidently cost an extreme effort not to show at the cottage, in the presence of the unhappy girl's parents. What a mockery was the so-called love of this Maurice Regan!

'There never was any address, and I haven't got a morsel of his handwriting,' said Annie with reluctance. 'We used to meet him, when I was with Cousin Harriet, at the Oxford or the Metropolitan, or wherever he sent word to Charlotte Fraser. Afterwards Charlotte and I didn't speak, but he would wait till I came out of the workroom in the evening, and come up as I was going home, and tell me where to meet him later.' She paused.

'But when last you left home, was it not to go to him?' Hippolyta felt she must ask this question. Annie's thoughts seemed to wander while she was answering.

'I couldn't stay quiet,' she said, 'that was why I ran away. I wanted to see Maurice; and though he knew I lived out here, he did not come as I thought he would. So I made up my mind to go and look for him at the old places where we used to meet. I had some money he gave me;

but I was hardly certain whether his right name even was what he said. Only I did love him, and I do still; and I don't care what he does, I shall always be faithful to him.' The tone of intense gravity with which Annie uttered these words, coming in the midst of real and undisguised trouble, would have amused Hippolyta at another time. Annie Dauris believed in the mock-heroic, and had no doubt practised it diligently. She must be fancying herself just then one of the distressed damsels whose abandonment by their lovers made the middle chapters—as it were the third and fourth acts—of those melodramas in prose which were the staple of her reading. But, unluckily, all the wretchedness was real; and the melodramatic winding-up was yet in the far distance, if it would ever come at all.

'Did you find him in the old places?' was Hippolyta's next question.

'Not for several nights, I didn't. I went all about, but I couldn't ask any one. I thought of waiting for Charlotte Fraser, but I was not going to give her the laugh over me; and I didn't know but he might have gone back to her, just for amusement, because he always told me he had not cared a bit about Charlotte. No more he had, I am sure. And I did see him at last, one night, as he was coming out of the Oxford. I ran to him and he seemed very glad. He called a cab and told me to get in, and gave the cabman the address, but I couldn't catch it.'

'Did he go with you?' said Hippolyta, waiting for the answer.

Annie did not return her glance, but answered quietly, 'No, he didn't go with me. And I wouldn't stay when I got there, late as it was. I got out of the cab and waited near the house a good many hours, until it began to rain. And he never came; and I was so desperate I went back all the way in the rain, and I don't know what I did the next days. I was mad, I think. It was after that Mrs. Wardlaw found me and took me to Miss Thatchford. And then the meetings began again, for I could get out unobserved, and this time I went to Charlotte Fraser's and we made it up. She did not care for him either. She had got somebody else, and she told him so,—better off, as she

said, than he would ever be; but it was all brag, I daresay. But still, all the same, she was not jealous, and we used to meet one another sometimes at the house where she lived. That is one of the reasons why I never had Maurice's address. But I must get it now, or I shall do something to myself. Do you think he is gone for good? Oh, don't say that you think so.'

'I don't know,' answered Hippolyta very slowly, and as if some unseen power were putting the words on her unwilling lips. 'Would it not be the best for both of you?'

'But I tell you, dear lady,' cried Annie, in her desperation, rising to her feet, 'that we love one another; I know we do. It is as sure as God is in heaven. He told me again and again that he was never happy without me; he counted the minutes till I came. And I am never happy when he is away,' she said, falling back into her chair. 'Oh, if you know what it is to be wild with love, and to pine and die because you can't be near the man your heart is set on, do help me to find Maurice again. If I only knew where to write I would go down on my knees and thank you. He would be sure to come when I told him I was dying for the sight of his face once more.'

She was pitiably in earnest now, not melodramatic. Hippolyta, divided between her early feelings and the rapidly growing conviction that, love or no love, Maurice Regan was a scoundrel, did not know how to reply. She sat in front of the hysterical, passionate girl in silence, dismayed and terrified, unable to put forth a syllable which should express her feelings. But where intellect failed the heart knew its way. Rising and going near to Annie, she drew the unfortunate child to her breast, and while Annie wept the bitter, hopeless tears of disappointed affection, Hippolyta mingled her own with them. For a while there was no other sound in the room. Then, lifting her face to the lady whose arms were clasping her, Annie said in a whisper, 'Do, please, find out the address for me.' Hippolyta shook her head sorrowfully. She was still undecided whether she ought to encourage any hope in that direction. What made her at last say, in almost as low a whisper as Annie's, the words that she had dreamt would

never have passed her lips? Was it an inspiration, or was it a surrender? She did not know. The sentence was short and simple enough. She said, 'But, Annie, would Mr. Regan ever marry you?'

The words were no sooner out of her mouth than she coloured from brow to chin; a deep swarthy hue accompanied with a burning sense of shame overspread her whole countenance, her eyes filled with hot tears, and, unclasping Annie's arms, she went hastily towards a table that stood in a dark corner of the room, as though searching for something. Annie, on the point of replying, was startled into silence. What had come over the lady? Was she suddenly taken ill? That, perhaps, was the explanation, for Mrs. Malcolm, after moving the ornaments about which lay on the carved wood table, returned with a richly-chased flask of sal-volatile, which she opened, and sprinkling some on her handkerchief put it to her forehead.

'Have you got a headache?' inquired Annie, brusquely to be sure, but not without feeling, thoughtless as she commonly was of the sufferings of any one but herself.

'It is gone now,' said Hippolyta, laying down the flask. She could not continue the conversation which was raising so great a storm in her breast. But she must inquire of Annie what her design had been in beginning it. 'What do you want me to do?' she said, almost in the tone she would have employed towards a stranger whom she distrusted. Annie, intent on her own projects, did not observe it.

'I want Maurice's address,' she answered, 'and you could get it from his brother the clergyman, Mr. Philip Regan, if you asked him, without saying who it was for. If I went to him he would perhaps give me in charge for coming about the house. At any rate he would never tell me, for he doesn't want me to know; he thinks I am Maurice's ruin. He said so that night in Dorset Square.'

'But I am not acquainted with Mr. Philip Regan,' returned Hippolyta; 'he would not be likely to tell a stranger who did not explain her purpose.'

'Oh, but you are a lady, and if you called on him the clergyman would very likely tell you anything you wanted very much to know. I can show you where he lives. He

goes a good deal among the poor people in his neighbourhood. It is near Saffron Hill. I have been there; I went with Charlotte once to hear the singing at the Italian church, and as we were coming home she pointed to the other church that Maurice's brother belongs to. Maurice lives somewhere else, by himself, he told me.'

Annie was beseeching and tearful, but she did not know the difficulties that lay in Mrs. Malcolm's path, or the feelings, so entirely different from her own, which struggled for the mastery in Hippolyta's bosom. There was the danger of an expedition into the heart of London, with all that might spring out of meeting a clergyman who, if he came so much in contact with the poor, would perhaps have heard of Colonel Valence, and might know those who would recognise Colonel Valence's daughter. But the main peril was of another kind. Had not fortune been dealing tenderly with Annie Dauris in taking away her unprincipled admirer and putting a great distance between them; and would it not be doing the girl an injury, an irreparable injury, to help towards a renewal of their acquaintance? On the other hand, she was not only foolish but stiff-necked, and more likely to run the worst risks than to give up the chance of discovering where Maurice Regan lived. With an invalid mother, and a father whose control over her was utterly at an end, she needed a friend, a counsellor, prepared to watch every step she took. 'There is none but I,' said Hippolyta to herself. 'And how can one that has assumed the character of a Mrs. Malcolm be a protection to such a girl as Annie?'

While she was turning over these things painfully in her mind, and her young companion sat looking and waiting for an answer, the street door was heard to open and close, and a step came along the hall. Hippolyta started up and threw down her work. She recognised the footfall outside. 'It is Rupert,—Mr. Malcolm,' she said in a hurried voice, and, leaving Annie, she ran out of the room. The sound of joyful exclamations and lovers' greetings reached the girl where she sat, and brought tears of rage and envy into her eyes. Why were other women to be so happy and she so miserable? Mrs. Malcolm was good, but she could have

hated Mrs. Malcolm; she hated all the world. In a few minutes Hippolyta came back, radiant, glowing with the unexpected delight of Rupert's presence. 'You must go now, my dear child,' she said, taking Annie affectionately round the neck; 'we shall not be able to do any more dressmaking to-day.'

The other, rising up to go, turned her large eyes upon Hippolyta and only replied by repeating her question, 'Will you find out for me about Maurice?'

The happy woman, rapturous at her own lover's arrival, could not be prudent or selfish then. She answered, 'If Rupert will allow me to go to Saffron Hill—if he does not think it wrong—I will call on Mr. Philip Regan, and tell you what he says.'

Annie lifted Hippolyta's hand to her lips with sudden passion, and went away.

CHAPTER XXVI

IF LOVE BE FREE?

RUPERT'S coming was not due to any sudden event, either pleasant or the reverse, at Trelingham. It was simply the escapade of a young man who is very much in love, and who discovers, or makes, in his daily pursuits an occasion for running off to the well of golden water, and there taking long draughts of felicity when no one is looking. As soon as the feeling of Hippolyta's presence which he carried with him into the West Country from Forrest House grew dim, a devouring melancholy seized upon him, a longing for which there was no anodyne, a weariness of all things which did not remind him of the maid of his heart, and a fever which seemed to infect him when he touched any trifle she had handled or come near. He wrought then like a man who is aware that one day's labour will purchase seven days' enjoyment,—fiercely, furiously, with his genius concentrated in every stroke, and a haste that is possible only to a spirit set on fire. He never painted so admirably; it was the passage of the beautiful, swift lightning over the face of a landscape, lambent, not destructive, adding a divine, an incomprehensible splendour to the colours and shapes of every day. But no sooner had he reached a stage where, without harm to the design, he could pause, than some attraction powerful as the magnet drew him to London. Now it was the need of refreshing his imagination by studying the great pictures—on which, in passing, he bestowed a glance, and hurried away from them to Hippolyta. Now it was an interview with some old friend who would be gone in a week, and whom he

must therefore catch on the wing. But when he did catch him, Rupert seemed preoccupied, amazed, drowned in reverie, not equal to conversation, though capable of sudden speeches whose poetry and grace were so remarkable that even those who had anticipated wonders from their brilliant acquaintance, felt in him something original and undreamt of hitherto. Or it would be the need of rare and curious ingredients for his palette, which no one could choose but himself; or of the learning on the subject of King Arthur which was locked up in out-of-the-way books. It was something or nothing, and the French philosopher who invented 'occasional causes' would have smiled in his grave to find such a powerful demonstration of them in Rupert Glanville's comings and goings.

But the beginning, the middle, the end of the story was Hippolyta and ever Hippolyta. 'Thine eyes are lodestars,' he would say, with the infantine plagiarism of lovers who think that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* were indited for their particular use. To arrive unexpectedly; to rush into the presence of Hippolyta palpitating with eagerness and the haste of his long expedition; to dine *tête-à-tête* amid the antique curiosities and delicate English comfort of that red brick mansion in whose oak-panelled rooms the ghost of his great-aunt, trailing her silks and laces, and shocked out of her propriety (even as a well-informed spectre) by the sight of such romantic love-making, was perhaps still wandering after nightfall; to discourse of ten thousand nothings as if they had infinite importance, making them the strings on which love's sweet voluntary was played; to laugh and be serious and move with sudden flight into the fiery empyrean, Love seeming all the while to hold the secret of life, and existence so abounding in joy that for very excess it was transmuted into pain; to be wrapt in the flame of another's being and to feel all one's faculties alive to their uttermost height,—what was Rupert that he should resist the spell or put from him the overwhelming ecstasy of these things, and be content with a work-a-day world which glared upon him, hot and dusty, when Hippolyta was not there? Again and again he fled to his enchanted island. He was lost, rapt out of the

sphere of things beneath the moon; he had broken through hedge and thicket, through thorn and brier, into the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, and, oh joy and wonder! it had only a single tenant who waked when his eyes were bent down upon her, and lived upon the breath of his lips. The tumultuous company of king and chancellor, of knights and serving-men, and all their noisy array, had sunk into a deep sleep, out of which, for his part, he desired never to awaken them. Why should not he and Hippolyta go on, loving and being loved, in the secrecy which increased their happiness a thousand fold and kept friends—those worst of foes—at a distance? 'We do not want the palace to wake up, do we, Princess?' he said to her playfully as they were walking up and down the central path of the garden once more. No, Hippolyta would have left them gladly to their slumbers. But she had a question to ask. Might she call on Mr. Philip Regan?

It was not without blushing on her side, and a good deal of laughter from Rupert, that she contrived to get her question out. And who was Mr. Philip Regan, if he might be so bold as to inquire, demanded Rupert in turn. A clergyman? Oh, indeed! And so Hippolyta wanted to see a clergyman, after all. She had come round, then, from her obstinacy; she had begun to think marriage in a duly licensed building not so wicked as it appeared a few months ago. Well, he had no objection. But, half in shame and the least bit inclined to be angry with her adored Rupert, she answered no, it was not as he supposed, and, if he would promise to keep quiet and not laugh at her, she would tell him. The artist, however, was in that mood of abounding joy which the old wise Greeks thought unseemly for a mere creature of a day, whose happiness might be blown to dust by the passing wind, and which they esteemed the forerunner of Nemesis. He was quite sincere in declaring that he would marry Hippolyta when she pleased; but if that was not her motive in seeking a clergyman—if, as seemed probable, it rose out of her enthusiasm for the poor of the neighbourhood, he would neither meddle nor mar, in accordance with the resolution he had taken at the outset. What did she want of Mr.

Regan? Hippolyta, somewhat confused by his previous jesting, could not answer in a moment; she hardly knew whether, in seeing Maurice Regan's brother, she intended to thwart Annie's wishes or to forward them. And the confidence which, on this seemingly unimportant subject, might have been established between herself and Rupert was made impossible by his fit of light-mindedness. Instead, therefore, of telling him Annie Dauris's story, she contented herself with saying that Mr. Regan had it in his power to assist the family of the gardener in whom she had taken an interest; but that it was a long way to Saffron Hill, and she had not been able to decide on risking a drive into the heart of London. All this sounded very like what Glanville had anticipated. He would have been alarmed had she spoken of visiting a fashionable preacher at the West End; but Mr. Regan was not known to him by name and could not be famous, while any chance of discovery in such a region as Saffron Hill was not to be imagined. He had implicit faith in Hippolyta, and, merely renewing his stipulation that she should not enter a place where there was risk of infection, and should withhold her address from Mr. Regan, he gave his consent. How seldom we know which of the cards we are holding in our hand will win or lose the game! To Glanville the clergyman was nobody; and Annie Dauris was not even a name; yet, if he could have been more sober amid the enchantments of that evening, if the frolic laughter of a spirit unbent had been kept in check, he might have discerned that Hippolyta, though no longer melancholy, was meditative, and after a new fashion.

More than once during those days Annie passed by the garden-gates; but, always seeing Mr. Malcolm, she did not venture in. She knew that Mrs. Malcolm would be kind, she was never anything else; but, so long as her husband stayed, there was no hope of her leaving Forrest House for an instant. How long, then, would he stay? To Annie it was a matter of life and death. Hippolyta, meanwhile, was like a water-lily floating in its dream of beauty on the tranquil waves, her thoughts absorbed, her feelings strung to their highest pitch of intensity, her sadness gone,

as Rupert perceived, and her attachment to the beloved becoming more and more a part of her existence. What could she desire that was lacking? News of her father's whereabouts? Yes, it was strange he did not write or send a message to Falside. But she resolutely put that trouble away from her, like one who is on a voyage and knows that months must elapse ere he can reach the home he has quitted, or need take up again the cares he has left behind. In the midst of such a vast expanse of happiness around her, it was not difficult to forget the past or to paint the future in hues of Paradise. Three or four days of perfect love, cloudless and serene; so many hours during which the heart was steeped in bliss, the imagination laughing and gay in its fairy visions—hours at once long as eternity, swift as thought, and like some momentary crisis that can never be blotted from the memory,—were they over so soon, and was Rupert to be spirited away once more to that Hall of Frescoes where she saw him, in his artist costume, beautiful and strange as a god, not hers, but dedicated to another service? Yes, they were over; but she must not sit down to weep. Why should tears be the price of that happiness? She would help some one else to be happy; she would take charge of Annie Dauris, since there was no creature near who deserved her attention better, none whose rescue would bring so much joy to the good people whom she had found worthy of her affection. When Annie came next to the gate Mr. Malcolm was gone; and on inquiry she learnt that Mrs. Malcolm had set out soon after him, and would not be back till evening. But the housekeeper did not know that Hippolyta had resolved on a visit to Saffron Hill. It was to be a secret from Annie, unless good was certain to come from telling her.

Hippolyta, meanwhile, though acquainted with London in her frequent journeyings to and from abroad with Colonel Valence, was not at home in the purlieus of the Italian quarter, and she had some difficulty in finding her way. It was no part of her intention to disclose whence she had come to Mr. Regan, and accordingly she sent back the carriage to Forrest House when it had conveyed her a couple of miles

in the direction of London. Walking some distance along the high road, she engaged the first cab that came towards her, and had herself driven to Hyde Park Corner. There she alighted again, turned down two or three streets, hired a second cab, and was taken, according to her directions, within a short distance of the church that Annie had pointed out as the one to which Mr. Philip Regan belonged. It was shut, as most London churches are on week days, or as at least they seem to be when one passes by; and this, in particular, had a padlock on its rusty gate. Hippolyta looked round for the clergy-house. There was no building near that corresponded with her rather vague idea of what such a residence should be: the surroundings were poor and squalid; the people she saw going in and out of the various houses were emphatically 'low'—that is to say, not only poverty-stricken, but brutish-looking;—and though many of the houses were large and of massive construction, their general appearance was one of such pervading filth, misery, discomfort, and, she would have said, of such engrained wickedness, that she felt sure no minister of a Gospel dwelt in any of them. She bethought herself of reading the notices which were posted up on the church door, behind the rusty grating. They dealt with the things of this world, with dog taxes and carriage licenses—the latter absurdly out of place in a quarter which was traversed only by cabs in their flight east and west, or by great drays and butchers' or costermongers' carts. The only carriages likely to be seen within a large radius of St. Audry's Church were, said Hippolyta to herself, the hearse and mourning-coach of the undertaker. Parochial announcements, too, stared her in the face; but it would seem that in the modern significance a parish was not the fountain of heavenly grace to those who dwelt within its borders, so much as a corporate body bent on exacting two shillings in the pound under severest threats from the subjects over which it ruled. On other sheets were published the hours of service and the amount of the Sunday collection, distributed in columns according to the silver and copper pieces of which it was made up. In a corner of the last Hippolyta read the address of the church-wardens; but, so far as she could conjecture, these gentlemen

abode at a distance, and the morning would be spent in seeking either of them. Were the clergy always so difficult to discover? She had thought of them as making a part of the buildings in which they officiated, but it would seem she was mistaken. What should she do next?

The way in which Colonel Valence had educated his daughter led to her being, in the presence of a trifling embarrassment like this, wild and shy. Clergymen were so closely bound up with that huge imposture called the social organism that Hippolyta, in endeavouring to find one of them, had something of the feeling which possesses a recruit who enters for the first time on a field of battle. She was excited and, perhaps it will be doing her no great injustice to add, slightly afraid. The medieval superstition which made men begin a story with the solemn announcement, 'in those days the devil walked openly in the streets of Heidelberg,' was paralleled to a certain extent by Hippolyta's shuddering reflection that she, a daughter of the Revolution, had come in search of that reverend vice, that sage iniquity, which, in the person of Mr. Philip Regan, was then stalking abroad through the streets of London. But she must find him; and after some hesitation, she entered one of the nearest houses, the door of which stood open, and knocked timidly. There was no answer for a time, but the scudding of children's feet was heard behind the partition, and by and by a room door opened and a tall, slatternly woman came out. She listened impatiently to Hippolyta's questions, eyeing her elegantly-dressed visitor with marked disdain; for there is the pride of Diogenes trampling on the pride of Plato in many an unkempt and ragged woman, when she brushes against another of her sex in silk attire. The only answer this virago made was that if the stranger would give Susan a penny, Susan would show the way to Mr. Regan's. Hippolyta was willing to give Susan many pence when she saw the pale-faced little thing, with her miserable frock reaching hardly to her knees, and an old straw bonnet on her head as much too large for her as the shabby frock was too small. The slatternly woman, among whose goods and chattels Susan was evidently reckoned, told her daughter in a loud voice to show where Mr. Regan lived and come

home straight when she had done so instead of playing in the gutter. Hippolyta spoke a word or two of kindness to the child, but she did not seem to notice it, and went on before, her head hanging a little on one side and her feet finding the way mechanically. It was no distance. In a side street about five hundred yards from St. Audry's stood the small, dingy-looking house in which Mr. Regan had set up his modest establishment as a bachelor or celibate clergyman. Hippolyta kept the child with her till the bell was answered. A decently-attired elderly woman came to the door, and, in reply to inquiries, informed Hippolyta that Mr. Regan was out on his usual morning round; that it was uncertain when he would come in, and that if her business was pressing the only chance of transacting it at once would be to follow the clergyman on his beat, which was fairly regular, and catch him as he went from house to house. Seeing the little girl by Hippolyta's side, the good woman gave her some particular indications as to the quarter of the parish Mr. Regan was visiting; and Susan, with the sharpness of her sex and bringing up, nodded intelligently and set out afresh, nothing loth to guide Hippolyta on her travels. Questions put at diverse points of their pilgrimage elicited the information that the minister had been seen a few minutes previously going into a house in what I will call Denzil Lane,—for the true name is too well known. Here, then, Hippolyta dismissed Susan after giving her a little more than she had promised.

It was a fine old street was Denzil Lane, with noble but shamefully dilapidated houses, once the mansions of illustrious families, on both sides, interspersed with miserable tenements huddled one against another and in the last stages of decomposition. The house to which Hippolyta was shown had a large entrance-hall and magnificent oak staircase, which were both dimly lighted from a great window on the first landing, every third pane of which was broken, and the rest discoloured with smoke and festooned with antique cobwebs. Throughout the building one might catch the sound of voices in the different rooms and the movement of a numerous life, for it was densely populated from the cellars, which lay in darkness under Hippolyta's feet, to the roof that

covered in a multitude of dismal attics. Knocking gently at the door on her left hand, Mrs. Malcolm inquired again for the whereabouts of this troublesome Mr. Regan. This time she received a civil answer from the woman who appeared on the threshold. 'Yes, Mr. Regan is upstairs, in the first floor front, but he may be there a long while. He always stays when he finds Mr. Mardol here.'

Hippolyta looked at her in astonishment on hearing the name. Could it be Ivor Mardol? What was he doing at such a time in such a place? 'Does Mr. Mardol live in this house?' she demanded, anxious to hear further about him.

'Oh no,' was the reply; 'Mr. Mardol is a good charitable gentleman, as well known in all the neighbourhood as Mr. Regan himself. They often meet in this way.' And the civil, talkative woman proceeded to express her wonder that they agreed as they did, and that they never had high words between them, considering that Mr. Mardol, like Mr. Minns, the tailor upstairs whom he visited, was an infidel, and Mr. Regan not only was a clergyman, but wore vestments on Sundays.

This was decisive. 'It must be the same,' said Hippolyta to herself. But how extraordinary that, in making inquiries about a stranger like Mr. Regan, she should have come upon the man whom she had been instrumental in sending away from the Hermitage, and whose absence, during those eventful weeks, had determined the course of her whole life! Should she endeavour to see and talk with him? He might be able to tell her something of her father. But, on the other hand, she had never learnt, or indeed cared to learn, by what name Colonel Valence was known, if known he personally was, to Ivor Mardol. While she was debating in her own mind, a door opened above and some one began to descend the stairs quietly. 'Ah,' said the woman, 'Mr. Mardol is coming. He has left the clergyman behind.' It was impossible for Hippolyta in the obscurity of the entrance to discern more than the figure of a young man coming down the stairs. But as he drew near and the light from outside fell upon his face, she uttered a cry of amazement, and went back some paces, almost into the street. Her own face, which had been in deep shade, was now lighted up in

turn; and Ivor Mardol, for it was he, startled on hearing the voice and hastening to discover who it might be, when he saw Hippolyta paused, and for an appreciable space of time looked at her fixedly without saying a word. They both offered a picture of surprise and astonishment. Hippolyta was the first to recover. She held up her hand in a peculiar way. Ivor grasped it, let it fall, and whispered the only words he had yet thought of addressing to this strange young lady. She replied in the like whisper, adding aloud, 'I know your name, Mr. Mardol, though we have never met before.'

He drew her back into the dark entrance. 'You are one of ours,' he said; 'have you come with a message for me?' He was calm, but exceedingly grave in voice and manner. No, she told him, their meeting was accidental; she had intended to find Mr. Regan. Then, remembering what she had heard from the woman who was standing by, and who had viewed their introduction of themselves to one another with great admiration, Hippolyta asked him whether he knew Mr. Regan intimately.

'As intimately,' answered Mardol, 'as one knows a boy that has been at school with one. Mr. Regan and I were in the same class at ——. We were not friends, however, and not enemies. Naturally, on leaving school we went our several ways, but when he came to work in these parts our orbits crossed again, and we are often in the way of meeting. If you wish to speak to Mr. Regan I will ask him to come down. What name shall I say?'

'Wait a moment,' answered Hippolyta; 'perhaps I need not speak to him. Tell me, do you know his brother, Mr. Maurice Regan? My business concerns him rather than the clergyman.'

Ivor considered before replying. He scanned the unknown visitor from head to foot, looked down, and said in a serious tone, 'I hope, my dear young lady, if I may take such a liberty, that it is no personal interest which prompts you to inquire for Maurice Regan. He is a dangerous man.'

'You do know him, then!' she exclaimed, 'and you can help me. But why do you call him dangerous? You confirm my suspicions.'

'He is one of ours, too,' said Ivor, with a look of mingled pain and displeasure; 'one by whom we shall gain little credit. If you will tell me why you are looking for him, I in turn will tell you all I know about him.'

'Most willingly,' said Hippolyta; 'but where can we speak? This place is too public and we shall be interrupted.'

'I will arrange that,' he replied. 'Here, Mrs. Scruton,' turning to the civil person, who was still at her door, 'have you the key of the committee-room? I want to show it to this lady.' Mrs. Scruton, after a minute or two of searching, handed him a large key, and he beckoned Hippolyta to follow him along the hall. When they were quite in the gloom of the staircase Ivor found a door on their right which no eyes, save those accustomed to the darkness, would have perceived. The key turned easily in the lock, and they entered a vast but desolate apartment which may have served in happier days for a drawing-room, though now it was bare of all that could make it pleasant or habitable. Some wooden benches were ranged along the walls; a table covered with moth-eaten baize stood at one end and beside it a wooden arm-chair, which Ivor presented to Hippolyta. She would have begged him to be seated, but there was not another chair visible. He laughed and drew one of the benches forward, and seating himself at a respectful distance from her, said in a low, earnest voice, 'Begin.'

Sympathy is never a matter of words, nor can the utmost eloquence so easily convey an assurance of it as the tone, the look, which expressing that something in us that lies deeper than speech, are powerful enough to create in an instant the warm, comfortable atmosphere in which we disclose our very soul to the listener. So was it now with Ivor and Hippolyta. By a subtle, instant process she knew that she had found a friend, and Ivor knew equally well that the young lady in whose presence he sat, and whose every word and motion had the highest distinction, was sincere, unworldly, and simply intent on doing good. She unfolded to him the story, so far as she was acquainted with it, of Annie Dauris, her passionate folly and despairing love for a man who seemed to have abandoned her and

gone his way. She added the dreadful suspicions which, from Annie's behaviour at their last meeting, she could not but have formed. Ivor listened without interrupting the recital, asked no questions till it was ended, and said merely as Hippolyta concluded, 'What did you propose to tell Mr. Philip Regan? the whole of this sad affair?'

'Yes,' said Hippolyta; 'I would have let him know everything, if he appeared to be a man of sense and judgment. If not, I would have asked him for his brother's address, and endeavoured to see him myself. Something must be done, or Annie will throw prudence to the winds and either disgrace her family or perhaps put an end to her wretched existence. She is not only giddy, but a slave of impulse.'

'Ah,' cried Ivor, standing up, 'is it not a heart-break to hear such things? Maurice Regan is one of the thousands that join our movement under false pretences, from their hatred of moral order and discipline, not from any wish to set their brethren free and lift them higher. He is a libertine, not a Liberal; but he thinks it is all one. I remember him, too, at school,—unruly, indulgent in every way that was then possible to himself, and hard as the nether millstone to others. He has since run through a younger brother's fortune, and plunged headlong into dissipation such as London offers on all hands to the base. He is a quick writer, speaks forcibly and fluently, and has rendered services to us in the press. But though I never thought he had principle, of course I was unaware of the misery he has brought on this poor girl. And now, you say, he has cast her off.'

'Entirely, it seems, unless something can be done to unite them. I do not suppose she will ever be happy with such a man; yet anything is better than to see her good father and mother so miserable.'

'But,' said Ivor, turning his serious glance towards Hippolyta, 'what can be done? I know the man's philosophy, as he calls it. He will never marry her, for he does not believe in marriage.'

Hippolyta trembled from head to foot. A feeling of sickness came over her, and she clung to the arms of the chair to keep herself from falling. What could she say?

in what way conceal her emotion? There was a difficult pause.

'No, I suppose not,' she said at last; 'but you—I—those who accept the Revolution, the principles of '89, do we believe in marriage?'

Ivor came to her with an air of infinite distress. 'I implore you,' he said with the most intense fervour, 'tell me, assure me that this is indeed the story of a third person, that—pardon me, I am too bold—that *you* are not Annie Dauris.'

Hippolyta smiled faintly. 'No, I am not Annie Dauris,' she said, regaining the control over her voice that she had lost; 'it is another's story, not mine. I should not dare,' she went on more steadily, 'to suggest in the hearing of a clergyman like Mr. Philip Regan the view I have expressed to you. Surely, Mr. Mardol, there can be no mistake as to the teaching of *our* religion. The free union of equal men and women is incompatible with marriage. If it is not, we are riveting again the chains that were smitten asunder when the churches went down.' She could face him now, this ambiguous son of the Revolution.

'I see,' he answered imperturbably, 'you are romantic. Excuse the word. I know the feeling, for I have gone through it. How shall I convince you that you are wrong?' He seemed to be pondering the matter. Hippolyta was too proud to submit to this.

'Nay, rather,' she exclaimed, 'how convince me that you have not forsaken the very principles of liberty and equality, if you are prepared to defend the iniquitous traffic in the souls and bodies of women which goes by the name of marriage?'

'Nay, nay,' he said. 'Let us use a little patience. I will convince you, if you do not shrink from the proof.'

'I shrink from no proof,' she said, rather hotly. It was too much. And he had been so full of sympathy while she was telling her tale; she must have been deceived in the man!

'Ah, but the proof I have in view is no less appalling than to plunge your arm up to the elbow in molten iron. There is but one cure for the stage of sentimentalism in

which all Revolutionists find themselves sooner or later; and that is contact with reality. It is very trying to the heart and the nerves, however good for the head.'

'I had imagined,' said Hippolyta scornfully, 'that it was contact with reality, with life, which created Revolutionists. Is not that your experience?'

'No doubt,' was his answer; 'but where many of us have mistaken, and constantly do mistake, is in being satisfied with our first knowledge, and losing touch of things when we go on to mould our philosophies, our Utopias. We look once, when we should look twice and thrice.'

'What do you understand by looking twice and thrice? Finding an excuse for the rulers of mankind and turning back to the *ancien régime?*'

'Not quite that, or I should have the courage, I hope, to declare that the Revolution and I had parted company. I mean, looking beyond to-day and to-morrow, considering what will happen when we have pulled down what is yet standing in our way. It is not enough to establish anarchy, as our friends now appear to have resolved. We must go on to establish that which, one day or other, ought to succeed anarchy—the kingdom of justice and of human brotherhood.'

'I am still in the dark,' said Hippolyta; 'apply your doctrine of second and third thoughts to marriage. The first thought, you will allow, is Free Love; every man and woman to choose the manner, the length, and the terms of union.'

'Yes, the romantic stage; degenerating in men like Maurice Regan into the stage of libertinism. Oh, I know,' he went on, lifting his hand as if to deprecate the expression of arguments familiar to him. 'You will say the abuse of Free Love is not greater, that its dangers are even less, than the abuse of marriage. But let me finish my prologue.'

Hippolyta, who had risen in her vehemence, sat down again. Ivor continued:

'When we turn our eyes upon life, as it is and has been, we are appalled at the multiplied serfdoms which go to make it up. Church, State, family, profession, rank in the world—what are these but names of long-established, deeply-rooted servitudes from which we can escape only by going into the wilderness? The present order of things is

founded upon manifest or disguised slavery. Neither those that command, nor those that obey, are free. The king wears a golden chain, the convict an iron one; but the king can have his will as little as the convict. Yet all this heaping of serfdom upon serfdom does not end in happiness. Some internal disease appears to be eating out the vitals of civilisation; and our Socialism and Nihilism are but desperate remedies for the universal gangrene. See how far I go with your first thoughts. Is it far enough?'

'Perhaps,' answered Hippolyta; 'I will tell you when I have heard your second.'

'How wise women can be sometimes!' he said, smiling. 'I am not sure that you will like my second thoughts. They may be brought under a single axiom——'

'And that is——?'

'That man is a spiritual being, and can therefore be neither saved nor lost by a change of institutions which in their nature are mechanical. Or put it this way, man is made by character, not by laws or ordinances.'

'My dear Mr. Mardol,' cried Hippolyta, 'that is the old Christian fallacy. Do not laws create, modify, and mould character? What but a difference of institutions has made the Turk other than the German, or the Hindoo other than the Mussulman?' She would have drawn out her instances, but Ivor by a sign entreated her to pause.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'you are talking the dialect of the eighteenth century; and *that* is the old leaven of Revolutionists. We should have made further progress if we had not yielded to that fallacy, which the Nihilists begin to see through. At the root of all institutions lies the national character. I admit that enormous changes ought to take place; I am doing what I can, as an individual, to help on the transformation. But, when all possible changes have come to pass in the outer world of law and custom, nothing will have been done unless a change has taken place in the inner world of the spirit. And now I will tell you how this bears on Free Love. We want all institutions cleared away which fetter a woman's power of saying no. We want every means bestowed upon

her by which she shall come to a full freedom of choosing, —a matter with which law has hardly anything to do, and custom almost everything. But this can be provided only by a right education of women.'

'Quite so,' said Hippolyta; 'that is what I have always believed. But would you have marriage indissoluble except by the legal process that drags a woman in the mire?'

'Now you have touched my second thoughts. Are the difficulties surrounding marriage artificial, that is to say of man's making, or do they exist in the nature of things?'

'How like a Socratic question!' she said, laughing, and Ivor joined in the laughter.

'A strange sort of question in Denzil Lane, is it not?' he cried. 'But this is one of the points on which my brethren and I cannot agree. So they have excommunicated me.'

'What!' said Hippolyta, becoming serious in a moment, 'you are jesting. It is impossible that you should speak so lightly if the thing had happened.'

'Well, it has happened. I do not wish to sail under false colours. I thought, in fact, when you disclosed to me your connection with the society, that you had brought me a message from the chiefs.'

'And that was why you looked so grave,' exclaimed Hippolyta, with compassion in every feature. 'Oh no, no, I had rather be excommunicated myself. But do tell me, if it will not distress you, how such a deplorable misunderstanding can have arisen?'

'It is no misunderstanding. In the society to which you and I belong, founded as it is on a social creed, speculative differences lead to very practical results. I must not disclose what is, after all, the secret of others; and I could not tell it now in any case. The quarrel is that deep one between the century which gave birth to the Revolution and the century which is guiding it through infancy. I believe there are difficulties—mysteries, if you like to call them so—in the nature of things, which must ever limit our aspirations towards an earthly Paradise. And I do not believe that to revolutionise all our institutions will have the effect which the brethren anticipate. As I say, the multitude are romantic and sentimental; they have not

read, they will not study, the annals of the past. And they little see that when they have abolished Church, State, and family in the old forms, all three will spring up again in the new.'

'Oh, this is melancholy,' cried Hippolyta. 'I know not if it is one degree better than my father's gloomy prognostications.'

'Who is your father, may I ask?' inquired Ivor.

Hippolyta hesitated. If Mr. Mardol were no longer on friendly terms with his old companions there might be danger in giving him the full answer. She said, therefore, in an off-hand way, to dismiss the subject, 'My father is a philosopher and inclined to be a Pessimist.' Then, with a change of tone, 'But where is your proof that conventional marriages are better than Free Love.'

'I did not say that,' he replied; 'but if you would wish —I should say rather, if you can endure—to see a world where Free Love reigns supreme and unchecked, I can assign you such guides, good and worthy persons of your own sex, as will show it you.'

'In what part of the world?' demanded Hippolyta.

'Here,' he said, 'on all sides, within a radius of a couple of miles. Have you the heart to go down into these depths? You are romantic, and naturally so, since you have dedicated your youth to the Revolution, like those passionate, intellectual women — true Sibyls and Amazons of our modern world — who lead the van in Moscow and St. Petersburg. But the young are enthusiastic without knowledge, as the old have knowledge without enthusiasm. Come and study life where it may be seen in myriad forms, all strangely, dreadfully instructive; and then tell me what you think of Free Love, Mrs. ——?' he paused inquiringly.

'Mrs. Malcolm,' she said with no tremor in her accent. Yes, she would come and see things with her own eyes. 'I am not afraid of truth or reality,' was her proud declaration to him. But she must not forget Annie. 'Can you get me Maurice Regan's address?' she said, rising to go when it had been settled that she was to return and begin her voyage of exploration in three days.

'I will inquire of his brother, and let you know,' replied Ivor; 'but, if I may offer one final piece of advice, it would be that you do not communicate with your young friend until you have gone over some at least of the scenes to which you will be taken. A desperate girl is, no doubt, one of the most fearful responsibilities you could have. But, on my honour and conscience, I do not think she could do anything worse, let her do what she might, than fall again in the way of Maurice Regan. She has perhaps escaped ruin once; but that sort of miracle is too rare to be looked for a second time. But you should watch over her as well as you can.'

He took up his hat where he had laid it on the green baize table, led Hippolyta to the door, which he locked, and asked her whether she would permit him to send for a cab. The day was fine, and, thinking she had better walk a little way, she declined. Ivor Mardol watched her depart, and, with an expression on his face which betokened great pity and equal doubt as to the destiny of such a frank and determined nature, restored the key of the committee-room to Mrs. Scruton, and went away in the opposite direction. He could not get the thought of Mrs. Malcolm out of his head that evening. Still enamoured of the lady whose bright eyes, had she been acquainted with his folly, would have scorned him at Trelingham, Ivor had only a calm, but a very sincere, interest to bestow upon any one else. He was in great trouble; his views had been altering and, as it seemed to him, enlarging for a number of years, and they had now brought him into a situation of such peril and loneliness that, but for his work among the poor, he must have sat down and eaten his heart with grief. From Hippolyta's conversation, from her way of putting what she had had to tell, he divined that there was a deep unsettlement beneath the daring opinions to which she had given utterance. Was she, like himself, ready to pass from implicit faith in the ways and principles of the Revolution to the severest criticism of them? No, not ready, far from it. But suspicions were rising up in the secret chambers of her heart and would not be lulled to sleep.

PART III

ARE THE GODS AWAKE?

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DEEPS OF HELL

TRUE to her appointment, Hippolyta arrived in Denzil Lane on the day and hour fixed by Ivor Mardol. The place of meeting was the committee room, and Ivor came, as he had promised, accompanied by one whom he thought well qualified to guide Mrs. Malcolm through the labyrinth of London misery and to bring her out unscathed. It was a lady of high standing, great wealth, a heart larger than all the wealth of the world, and that wonderfully humanising experience which forty years of service among the poorest outcasts could not have failed to give. Miss Desmond, the daughter of an untitled but very ancient and noble line, was, in all but name and outward habit, a sister of charity. Endowed with a fortune in land and railway shares which amounted to some score of thousands a year, and which was entirely at her own disposal, she had early come to a determination that it should be spent in the endeavour to diffuse a little happiness around her. For she was modest and unassuming, with that quick discernment in matters of benevolence—she had no great learning or accomplishments of any other kind—which enabled her to see, almost in her first year's novitiate among the byways of the world, that

money is only the beginning, and that philanthropy, like most things worth pursuing, is an arduous enterprise. She perceived that it was surrounded with difficulties; that it required a special tact if the result was not to be waste of resources, ingratitude, the demoralising of those who had seemed already at their lowest, and the added sufferings which arise at the remembrance of opportunities lost. It was clear that she must give something more than money and kind words,—she must give herself. The resolution cost her an effort. Miss Desmond's charity, flowing from a tender heart, was allied to the many virtues, and no less to the many vices which may spring from a quickness to feel and to suffer. She was naturally fastidious, shrinking from the sight of pain, and disposed to be indignant with those she could not help, from the very keenness of her sympathy with them. But she was, too, a simple-hearted Christian, not minding the varieties of creed which she took for granted among the other inexplicable facts around her; she read her Bible and found good in all its pages. 'To succeed through failure,' that was her device. Had any one accused her of paradox she would have answered quietly, 'Come and see,' pointing to the work of rescue which had been accomplished by following these divine tactics. She gave her time, her thought, her affectionate care, her never-ceasing diligence, to the task of winning from the miserable wretches whom she had taken for her province a little human trust; and when the heart was opened on both sides she gave wisely and abundantly of the lesser gifts, not now as a matter of pity and alms-deeds, but as to her brothers and sisters. For one that understood this exquisitely humble and loving spirit there were ten, there were fifty, ready to mock and to deceive. She knew it and bore the heavy burden as her Saviour bore the Cross on which He was to redeem the world. And she had her reward, often unexpected, but always exceeding great. The delight of her life was to save the young out of that terrible devouring fire through which they are passed to a worse than Moloch. She had ransomed many hundreds and sent them to the far continents which have been created to redress the injustice and lighten the shameful misery of a civilisation become so

chaotic as our own. 'Her children,' for so she called them, wrote from all parts of the world to their mother, encouraging her by the prospect of their well-doing to continue this task of diving for pearls in the deep sea. She was a beautiful, welcome figure as she appeared in the fever-haunted dens and crowded fetid dwellings into which she never hesitated to pierce her way. It was on such errands of charity, now some years ago, that she had come across Ivor Mardol. Their work did not clash, and he was so gentle, clear-minded, and self-sacrificing, so little disposed to introduce dogmatic quarrels where the great text of love sufficed for a whole Gospel, that Miss Desmond and he became ere long the closest of friends, and she employed him to distribute her charities in many a case which did not seem to admit of her personal intervention.

Such was the guide whom Ivor had designed for Hippolyta. Knowing only that the young lady who called herself Mrs. Malcolm was of 'the movement,' and that she had been led, by her innocence and enthusiasm as he did not doubt, into one of the most fatal delusions which attended, if was not a part of, the revolutionary creed, he could not give Miss Desmond any information as to her antecedents or present mode of life. But he said enough to suggest that here too a good work might be accomplished if Mrs. Malcolm were allowed to go with her. Hippolyta assured him that she desired to labour among the people, and that all she sought was a sufficiently wide sphere, and some one to warn her when she was likely to make mistakes. All this, it may well be supposed, Miss Desmond cheerfully undertook; and their first interview brought out the most amiable qualities of the two women, so much alike in what they felt for the suffering multitude, and in all else so decidedly contrasted. Hippolyta Valence was at this time in the bloom of youth and beauty; she loved and was beloved; she did not anticipate sorrows of her own, and the immense happiness she enjoyed gave her a courage in dealing with the miseries she came across which added something heroic to her dauntless character. She still looked forward to playing a noble part in the revolution which was to bring all good things; and the sense of failure was an experience she had never gone through. Moments, I have said,

of passing melancholy came to her, but they were like ripples on the stream raised by a breath of wind and dying down with it into the smooth waters.

How little did all these traits resemble the elderly Miss Desmond, now close upon her sixtieth year, of plain though not unlovely countenance, with silver-gray hair and slightly wrinkled forehead, tall and thin, not much given to smiling except when children came about her, and with a heart in which the sorrows of so many had taken up their abode! There was an air of tender resignation, or of resigned hope, in her movements, and a quietness in her manner of speech that seemed to make of the world in which she lived habitually one huge hospital, and of herself an unwearied seldom-sleeping nurse by the bedside of patients innumerable. And she had that calm wisdom which grows up in the soul and governs the thoughts when all the evil places of life have been explored with the ray of sunshine we call goodness. In Hippolyta there was, despite her marriage that was no marriage, the naïve goodness of childhood; she knew the world as in a picture-book. Whereas the spotless maiden lady, upon whose reputation no breath of slander had passed, went to and fro among the horrors of the great city as an angel might descend into the lake of fire, and by virtue of the heavenly element he brought with him return unharmed into the presence of the Most High. It is not knowledge that leads to wickedness always; indeed, I would rather say, there is a degree of knowledge with which wickedness is incompatible. And thus that strange-looking angel, Miss Desmond, opening her wings to shelter the young and beautiful Hippolyta, and bidding her fear no evil, descended with her into the Inferno of London.

There is a story told of one of the modern Catholic saints—is it San Filippo Neri, the Florentine?—who endeavoured to convert a young man of the world, the wicked world of other times, not ours, from the errors of his ways, but in vain. To all his admonitions the pleasure-seeker returned a mocking laugh. 'I see,' said the saint gravely, 'that I must deal with you in earnest. Kneel down and lay your head on my knee.' The young man, still laughing, did so. Filippo Neri laid both his hands on

the bent head before him and prayed for some moments in silence. When he had ended he said, 'Now, get up and go your way.' The young man arose, his countenance fixed in horror, and departed without saying a word. But from that day he was a changed being; and those who knew him intimately whispered, that while he bent his head upon the saint's knee he beheld the underworld opened beneath him, with its vision of fire and hopeless torments. Such was the experiment Ivor Mardol was now attempting with Hippolyta Valence. What was to come of it the sequel must disclose.

That young man converted by San Filippo Neri did not speak often of his vision. There are many reasons, apart from a divine command, which seal the lips of those who are best acquainted with the secrets of the prison-house. It is enough to have been in hell. The horrors and fears of that abyss, which spouts its dark fire into the atmosphere of many a proud city, will not bear to be dwelt upon in the tender light of day; and no reader will expect from me more than the abstract and brief chronicle of what Hippolyta beheld during those months,—they were few but actively spent—in which she accompanied Miss Desmond, and laid to heart the revelation that was awaiting her. What did she see, you ask? Nay, rather, what did she not see, of things that would dim the very eyes of God with tears where He sits in glory, were it not for some secret anodyne that He keeps for the world's healing in His own good time? She descended into depth below depth; she heard the lives, recounted by themselves, of those to whom misery was their proper element; she gathered up the sighs of innocent children blasted by evil ere they knew that good existed; she attempted, but in vain, to reckon up the pangs that made each particular agony; she drew back to contemplate the universal woe in its length and height and breadth; but the spectacle was too much for her, and she could not see for weeping. 'Why,' she asked herself wonderingly, 'how did life continue under these iron laws? What hindered men and women from making an end of it all with themselves?' The conception of life to which she had been accustomed was an harmonious development of all its faculties under the guidance of reason; she

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had ever upon her lips such words as love, progress, light, the true, and the beautiful. Her world was an ordered music into which discords came only that they might enhance the effect. Not that she had dreamt the music was everywhere or always playing. That the multitudes were miserable had been, as she told Ivor Mardol, the foundation, the justification of her creed. But she seemed to have been speaking by rote when this immense and hideous tapestry, painted in all lurid colours, was unrolled before her. The creating word of her universe was love. And here, what had love become? It was little to say that she had left the realm of humankind to lose herself in a howling wilderness of wild beasts. These were not wild beasts; they were men and women. That was the culminating horror. Upon the rage, and hunger, and passion of the brute-world instinct puts a check. The tiger, when he is sated, falls asleep; the boa is torpid when he is gorged with prey. It was the absence of a governing principle, the boundless lust, the steady unintermittent fury, the feeding of death upon death, which made even Hippolyta's pitiful heart long for a flame to run through the sky from east to west and devour the uncleanness, though it should lick up with the same tongue whatever life was found within the horizon. There was no law, there was no light, there was no shame. She saw only a festering heap of human beings, flung on top of one another and kneaded into a pestilential mass by the iron heel of necessity. And morning after morning flowers sprang up on the black dunghill and turned their leaves hopelessly towards the sun that would not shine on them, and withered, and were trampled into the foul mass. For in this horrible world children were born by the hundred thousand—delicate children, sometimes beautiful, with their large tender eyes, always frail and in need of sustenance and of love. Every house into which Miss Desmond led her swarmed with children as a hive swarms with bees. When they were fortunate they died young. And how short was the youth of those that lived! At six years old a child in the deeps of London has seen most that can happen of foul, unclean, and heartbreaking on this planet of ours. But ere its

birth it is predestined by the laws of the dark realm into which it must enter to be a devil's child and never to know the face of its Father in heaven. Its very breath and bones are made of vice. The typical child of the well-to-do classes looks beautiful, strong, happy, and innocent. The typical child, encountered again and again by Hippolyta as she moved in that short radius of which Denzil Lane was the centre—the angel of the house whom she beheld in every nook and corner of that dismal universe—was ugly, deformed, ailing, accustomed to stripes and blows, full of premature greed, a thing of rags and disease, old in sin, and steeped in impurity. No hand of redemption or blessing had ever come nigh it. And was there any production of Nature alone so complete in hideousness?

To be suddenly flung out of the blue ether into the abysses of death; to exchange the feeling of Rupert's love with all its glowing lights and hues of romance, as softly blended as the prismatic sheen of the dove's neck, for the desolation into which no love came,—this was the experience which Hippolyta had chosen to undergo. Her existence had been merged in his; they two were all the world to one another, and their life had taken the grandest sweep towards the Ideal, for it was full, and actual, and unselfish, and its fulness consisted in their thinking high thoughts and sharing in the most exquisite sentiments together. Now was Hippolyta to see how differently things might be ordered for men and women of like texture with herself and Rupert. The one great, astounding, miserable fact which smote her in the face wherever she turned was the absence, the utter ignorance on all sides, that such love could exist. The genius of Dante, it is well known, has conceived the central core, the innermost circle, of his *Inferno* as not fire but thick-ribbed ice. The breath of Lucifer freezes; it does not burn. This unexpected and most awful thought, containing in itself more than the poet was perhaps aware, recurred to Hippolyta many, many times during her pilgrimage among these living damned. She had expected to find an outburst of love, wild and exuberant as spring on the plains of the East. She found the very opposite. Instead of tropical heat and the quick

succession of sentiments which might be justified in the poet's eyes by their warmth and intensity, what she perceived was—how shall I express it?—a cold fury, a chill and dreary animalism, in which the embers of human feeling were hardly to be discerned. All things here had a wan, spectral appearance, not inconsistent with murderous impetuosity or the frenzy of hate and desire. But love? Ah, now she began to understand what a solemn and sacred word it was, how little to be confounded with the instincts which, having full sway among these dreadful *simulacra* of humanity, were but a madness added to the rest which made ascent towards the light impossible. Without saying it to herself, or indeed knowing that such a truth was becoming luminous to her, she felt that the noble conception of love had its roots in the reverence and reserve, in the great all-surrounding atmosphere of modesty, which makes the distinction between true refinement and barbarism, be the latter never so gilded. Where shame is wanting, love cannot exist. In these regions there was no such thing as solitude, privacy, or a house with closed doors. There was not room to move in, not air enough to breathe. The confusion of ages and sexes, of strong and feeble, even of good and bad, was beyond description. No slave-ship was ever more crowded than the miles of narrow streets through which Hippolyta, shuddering and sick at heart, was forced to thread her way. For those who dwelt in them Nature had no meaning; the green of the meadows, the grace of field and forest, the beauty of running water, nay, the very lights of heaven did not exist for them. All they knew was this living prison of human bodies which hemmed them round, and from the walls and roofs of which came incessantly, as in a falling shower, sounds of blasphemy, rage, cursing, pain, hunger and thirst, intoxication, insanity, and murder. It was not to be thought that love could unveil its shy face amid such horrors. The charm of love is, in the for once poetical imagery of Swedenborg, that it draws two spirits from the ends of heaven to meet and embrace, obeying the secret laws of affinity which make them and them only fit for one another. How preserve such transcendent personality in the thick of such a crowd as was

here battling for life and trampling the fallen into a gory slime? It was a strange place to come to for the revelation of the sacredness, the singleness, so to speak, of love. Yet this was what Hippolyta learnt; and on her first meeting with Ivor Mardol she put her experience into such words as would most forcibly express it. They were together again in the committee room, where Hippolyta was waiting for the arrival of Miss Desmond.

'But I cannot agree with you, Mr. Mardol,' she continued, 'that I have witnessed the evil consequences of Free Love. I see no love anywhere in this frightful chaos.'

'It is exactly the same thing,' he answered, not at all as if uttering a questionable saying.

'The same thing to love, and not to know its meaning? You are bent on mystifying me, I perceive.'

'Not at all. Both are forms of infinite caprice, of desires not brought under reason. Free Love and unbridled passion will ever be one to the multitude at large. If by Free Love, indeed, you mean the choice by one man of the one woman in all the world that Nature destined for him, and passing by all others as objects only of chivalrous devotion, not of personal attachment, do you know what star will rise in the sky of humanity?'

'Tell me,' she said, with great earnestness.

'The star of Duty,' he replied. 'There can be no rational freedom in love, or in aught else that belongs to our nature, when Duty is cast out.'

'And is it a duty,' she inquired, her eyes glowing as she spoke, 'to go on pretending to love when affection is dead?'

'No; but affection which has once taken on itself the yoke of duty will not die; it partakes of the spirit's immortality. You are still persuaded, I see, that instinct, passion, and true love are but different names for one feeling. It is not so, believe me. The human element which transmutes instinct and passion to love is the will lighted up by reason.'

'Then love is never spontaneous, and your philosophy transforms it to a palace of ice.'

'Nothing was ever more spontaneous than love; but not all that is spontaneous should be confounded with it.'

'Ah, here comes Miss Desmond,' cried Hippolyta, relieved at her appearance, for she was beginning to feel a vague trouble like the first slight symptoms of a dangerous illness. 'I will go with her, and leave you to your abstractions, which do not suit me at all. I am sure Miss Desmond is not a Stoic.'

'And you think I am?' inquired Ivor with his usual serenity; 'well, never mind. Only apply what I have been saying to any cases you may meet in your excursion to-day, and let me know whether the idea of duty is not a key to unlock even a larger number of doors than your idea of sacred personality,—with which, observe, I have no quarrel. But we should beware of idols, and look life in the face. You will pardon my unmannerly presumption.'

He went away, convinced that Mrs. Malcolm would not let his words fall to the ground. She had that within, he felt sure, which prompted her to find a solution of some difficult problem closely affecting her happiness; though what it was he neither asked nor desired to know. He had learnt that it is best to wait until people begin to speak of their own accord. It was a simple word, Duty, but an infinite idea; and he knew how far it had led him on the path he was pursuing. If Mrs. Malcolm had need of it,—and with her the superstition of Free Love was evidently more than a mere opinion,—she would be reminded forcibly of its sacred character, of its supreme worth, by the contrast of so many myriad lives in which it found no place. 'Freedom,' he murmured as he went along; 'yes, the freedom to do right. That will carry us a little farther, I trow, than the freedom to destroy a man or an institution which happens to stand across the path of progress.'

He was not mistaken. Hippolyta dwelt more than she would have been willing to confess on those Stoic aphorisms, as she called them by way of lessening their importance. But her expeditions into a strange and dismal realm, these dazzling cross-lights, and great spaces of darkness, where it seemed that neither Conservative nor Revolutionist could discover a pathway, inflicted on Hippolyta the sense of deep disappointment, and little by little drew the

clouds over her sky. Was it so very hard to make things better? Miss Desmond, though faithful to her task day and night, evidently thought so. Ivor Mardol thought so. Her father, who had begun with an impassioned belief that the progress of the Revolution meant universal happiness, had grown pessimist and saturnine as he reckoned up how little had yet been done. When Hippolyta spoke in the old eloquent way to Mardol of reconstructing society from summit to foundation, he answered sadly that the creative spirit did not come at call, and we wanted rulers of men not partisans of chaos. 'When you have got your anarchy,' he said with a melancholy smile, 'what will you do with it?' Hippolyta could not refute his doubts. She had lived in dreams, then, and the waking reality did not at all resemble their pliant lovely shapes. It was stern, cold, unmanageable, like granite which has been melted but once by the primeval fires and can never be moulded again by the forces at man's command. Colonel Valence's daughter became at times unhappy, with a sensation as if she too were lying under anathema and had brought a curse, she knew not how, on herself and the miserable creatures whose wants she was endeavouring to supply.

A more tangible discomfort was the impossibility of discovering a trace of Maurice Regan. She could not now enjoy the leisure which had been hers at the beginning of her stay at Forrest House, and consequently she saw Annie Dauris not nearly so often. But whenever she did, the girl cried like a feverish child, 'Can you tell me anything of Maurice?' Hippolyta had consulted Ivor Mardol; and by his advice she neither called on Mr. Philip Regan nor told Annie that she would do so. Ivor made inquiries of the clergyman from time to time, but he received the invariable answer that Maurice Regan's only address was at his chambers, that he never came there but had his letters sent on, now to one place, now to another, and that apparently he lived a wandering life and was not to be met in London. Hippolyta did not see the advantage of telling these things to Annie; they would only make her restless, and, on the whole, if, as time went on, Maurice Regan kept out of her sight, she might give up the expectation of finding him,

and resign herself to the life in her mother's cottage. There she would be safe whatever happened. Mrs. Malcolm did not venture to express her more painful thoughts to the gardener's wife. She hinted something, but Mrs. Dauris was very ill, did not realise what she heard, and repeated her assurance that Annie had only been foolish, not wicked. The girl herself was obstinately silent. Thus matters stood when Hippolyta, after a hard day at the East End, came in late and tired. She made a light dinner, and lying down, fell into a deep sleep which lasted longer than usual. About eight next morning she was awakened by the entrance of the housekeeper, who, with many apologies for disturbing her, announced that the little boy, Charlie Dauris, was in the hall, and begged earnestly to see Mrs. Malcolm. 'Does he say what it is about?' inquired Hippolyta, sitting up as she spoke. 'No, ma'am,' replied the good woman; 'I asked him, but he would not tell. He was crying, though; and I have no doubt they are in trouble. Perhaps his mother is worse.' The thought startled Hippolyta, who remembered how delicate Mrs. Dauris had been looking lately. She sprang up, and sending Mrs. Leeming downstairs, said she would come in a moment. What could it be? Making a hasty toilette, she ran down into the hall, where Charlie was standing, his eyes fixed on the ground, and great tears rolling down his cheeks. Hippolyta kissed the boy,—who was, as I have said, a favourite of hers, and of a very feeling, affectionate nature,—and took him into the dining-room. 'What is it, Charlie dear?' she said anxiously. 'Is your mother not so well?'

'Mother is very ill,' he answered; 'but it is not that. It is Annie. Oh, Mrs. Malcolm,' he said with a fresh burst of weeping, 'Annie's run away again, and she left this letter for you on her bed. Mother found it this morning when she went to call her.' And so saying he gave a sealed envelope into Hippolyta's hand. She went towards the light to read it. There were only a few lines, hastily scrawled, but when Mrs. Malcolm arrived at the end of them, she turned deadly pale, and sat down like one about to faint, putting her hand to her forehead in great and

evident distress. It was shocking; it confirmed her worst expectations.

Annie wrote, in haste and agony, that she dared stay at home no longer. She reproached herself bitterly for not being so frank with Mrs. Malcolm as she ought to have been. The story she had told her about Maurice Regan was not the whole truth. He had been her true love, but he had ruined her; and she was going now to find the father of the child that should be born to her, and in case she could not find him to put an end to her misery. She would never, never come home again. She begged Mrs. Malcolm, for the love of God, to break the news as gently as she could to her poor mother. 'It will be her death,' were the concluding words of the letter; 'but I cannot help it. I must go.'

Hippolyta did not know which way to look. She was dazed and confounded. While she had been endeavouring to rescue strangers at the other end of London this unhappy child had escaped her at her own door. How convey the fearful news to the mother, who would perhaps die of a broken heart, or to the father upon whom Annie had always so unjustly cast the blame of her wicked conduct? Oh, what a desolate home would that be when they knew the reason of their daughter's flight! The boy, meanwhile, stood looking at Mrs. Malcolm with tear-filled eyes, not venturing to ask her what his sister had written. But when he saw how she began to cry, he ran to her and put his arms affectionately round her neck. 'Poor Charlie,' she said, pressing him to her, 'you have a bad sister. Never mind, we must do what we ought.' And, rising up, she hastily poured out a glass of water and put it to her lips. She could touch none of the breakfast that lay on the table. Her one thought was to go immediately to the cottage and do what she could to comfort Mrs. Dauris. The lady and the child were soon on their way, Charlie holding her hand fast and looking up to her from time to time as with panting breath they hurried along. Before they could reach the gate they saw Mrs. Dauris waiting for them on the threshold. Hippolyta keeping the letter in her bosom, where she had unconsciously thrust it, embraced

the poor invalid with overflowing sympathy, and led her without saying a word into the house. There Mr. Dauris sat expecting her in the arm-chair by the window, his head bent upon his breast, absorbed in painful thoughts.

Hippolyta had never fulfilled such a task as now devolved upon her. To acquaint these friends whom she loved and pitied with their daughter's dishonour, to hint at her probable fate unless immediate steps were taken to find out whither she had gone, to soften their despair, and induce them to master their grief lest it should prove the occasion of Annie's irremediable ruin;—and to do all this, knowing that she could not appeal to religious principles in which she did not believe, or comfort them with the possibility of a marriage that would be the remedy of past and future;—it seemed a thing beyond the strength of woman. But Hippolyta was self-denying to an heroic degree. She would not utter what she did not believe. Nevertheless with tact and gentle feeling, in accents wherein all the tenderness of her nature found expression, she unfolded to them the story of shame. She could not hinder it from overwhelming them. It was a thunderbolt that smote the fabric of their happiness at the four corners and brought it to the ground. In comparison with the sin, the disgrace, the horror of what had befallen them, death was nothing.

'I could have borne to see her die,' said Mrs. Dauris, falling back on her couch and clasping her hands wistfully,—'that would have been only giving her back to God from whom we received her. But to think that my Annie should be her own murderer and perhaps her child's.' She could say no more.

'God's will be done,' said her husband reverently. 'I tried to bring my daughter up well. She has turned out perverse, and now we must bear her shame.'

Hippolyta suggested that Maurice Regan might yet be found. If Annie did not come upon his traces, they, with his brother's assistance, perhaps should fare better.

'I doubt it—I doubt it,' replied the gardener after a moment of sad reflection. 'And what though we do? We cannot compel him to marry the wretched creature he has ruined.'

It was impossible, in a house where the new ways of thought had not penetrated, to whisper that if the two young people were in love they might be happy together without marriage. To her intense surprise Hippolyta felt that the mere suggestion, though confined to her own breast, was not right. Would not perfect reciprocal affection, then, be enough unless marriage came to add its consecration? She sat thinking over it. When a little while had passed, and they were still silent, considering what to do first, she said hesitatingly, 'But I cannot help believing that he really did care for Annie; in which case, if he can only be told what has happened, he will come to her rescue.'

'Care for Annie,' echoed Mr. Dauris with deep disgust in his tones; 'forgive me, my dear lady, you know too little of the world or you would not say that. He cared for her as much as he would for a wildflower plucked out of a hedge. He cared for himself, the dastardly villain; that is all such men care for.'

The gardener rose and went to the door. 'It is the old story,' he said very bitterly; 'I must go to the police station once more and tell them to make inquiries. I shall soon be well known there, with my runaway daughter.'

'Oh Annie, Annie,' sobbed the mother, as her husband went out, 'how little you thought of the trouble your wilfulness would bring on us all. See what it is,' she continued, turning to Mrs. Malcolm, 'not to have any rule or check but your own pleasure. It means misery to every one belonging to you.'

What could Hippolyta say? She was stricken dumb.

But there was little occasion for her to say anything. The question was what could be done. Mrs. Dauris became so affected by the thought of Annie's past misconduct and present danger that she went from one fainting fit into another; and it was all Hippolyta could do to attend upon her while Charlie went to Forrest House to fetch Mrs. Leeming. For there was no one but the elder boy to watch over his mother; and it seemed advisable to communicate at once with Ivor Mardol, whose address Mrs. Malcolm fortunately knew. He was well acquainted

with the ways of underground London; he could induce Mr. Philip Regan to make inquiries for his brother, and at the same time could plant scouts in the neighbourhood which Annie Dauris had been wont to frequent. Hippolyta, therefore, made haste to leave Mrs. Dauris in competent hands, took a melancholy meal at home, standing up in her desire to have done with it, and ordered the carriage to take her to Mr. Mardol's house, in Grafton Place. She had never been there previously, nor was she aware of the trade or profession, if any, to which Ivor belonged. It was so considerable a distance that the coachman, surprised, repeated the address to make sure he had not mistaken. She bade him impatiently drive on. The day was cold and the air brisk. To make sure of Mr. Mardol Hippolyta had despatched a message by telegraph, asking him not to leave Grafton Place till she arrived.

During the long journey, wrapped in the costly furs that Rupert had presented to her when the cold set in, Hippolyta had leisure for thinking. Her thoughts were far from pleasant. She blamed herself for not having offered better advice to Annie Dauris, whom she had encouraged, it now seemed to her, in making sentiment the mainspring of all her actions. Why not have shown her the folly of such ill-assorted love? Why, at least, not have put by the side of her wild romantic notions the stern truth which even at that moment she, Hippolyta, was learning under the guidance of Ivor Mardol and Miss Desmond? Why not have made more strenuous efforts to elicit her secret? But no, she had been absorbed in self, eager only to make out a strong case for that yielding to impulse which was the cause and explanation of Annie's downfall. Oh, she could have reviled herself bitterly; no words of condemnation could be too severe for her. If Annie had gone to such a friend as Miss Desmond, how differently matters might have fallen out. Then she began, as we all do when most occupied with the troubles of another, to look into her own situation. It was no longer so plain to her as it had been. True, she had wronged nobody, had brought no desolation to her father's heart, nor dishonoured his gray hairs. What she had done and was doing, the

manner of life to which she had given herself, would have received Colonel Valence's approval, she knew quite well, had she been able to inform him of it. Her action was not the fruit of a passionate impulse; it had been calm and deliberate. Nor was she prepared to allow that society had the best of the argument, in spite of Ivor Mardol's demonstration from the chaotic deeps of life. It did not touch her, though it might be applicable to such as Annie Dauris. For all that she could not resist the uneasiness which seemed to be creeping over her, like a fog which makes the lights indistinct and the ways uncertain. She wished—and yet again how could she wish?—that Rupert were at home. He would have aided her to think as she ought. But not so, he would have encouraged her scruples, for he desired nothing so much as that they should marry like the rest of the world. There it was,—the rest of the world, the hardness, injustice, cruelty, luxury, unmanliness, the atheism of that most despicable and sordid kind which consists in blinding our eyes to the godlike which is in man. 'Ah,' said Hippolyta more than once as the carriage bore her along, 'I knew well it was the heart of the question. To surrender that one point is to acknowledge that there is no remedy, that men and women must go on suffering, hating, despairing, trampling down others, or being trampled on themselves. I will not believe it. Free love may be an impossible dream; these laws of marriage are a real and present slavery.' But again she asked herself whether she was not hurrying forward in the hope of finding Maurice Regan and persuading or compelling him to marry the girl whom he perhaps had ceased to love? 'What a tangle life is!' said Hippolyta.

The carriage stopped. Mrs. Malcolm looked out and saw a small, but rather quaint-looking house, two stories high, with a clean pavement in front of it, and a strip of open ground on each side, making with the wall of the adjoining houses a sort of passage leading probably to some enclosure beyond. She caught a glimpse of tall wooden beams standing upright, or slanting across one another at the end of the passage, and making that appearance against the sky which in a city always reminds one of ship-

building. It was, in fact, a joiner's yard, with sawmills attached, and the smell of fresh wood had something in it briny and sea-like. Hippolyta alighted, and at that moment Ivor Mardol opened the door and bade her come in. She entered after a word to the coachman, whom she desired to wait, as there might still be need of him.

The entrance-hall in which she found herself was square, with a low ceiling of some ancient woodwork; and the walls were hung with engravings or decorated with exquisite specimens of carving. A low, broad staircase, dark and polished, with massive wooden rail, led to the upper apartments. To the right a curtain of gilt leather hung over and concealed the entrance to Ivor's workroom. Holding it aside, the engraver, as that room would soon declare him to be, made way for Hippolyta, who was so tired that she threw herself into the first chair she saw, and being more agitated than at any former time in her life, more even than the night when she came to Rupert's studio, on sitting down burst into tears.

Ivor was alarmed and distressed. Ready, on receipt of Mrs. Malcolm's telegram, to believe that something had happened, he did not know what to conjecture. But he had seen enough of the lady before him to be assured that she was of a high-strung, resolute nature; and the fact that she kept her residence and the circumstances of her life a mystery, not only from himself, but from Miss Desmond, indicated that there were reasons for doing so of which her present visit to him might be the consequence. However, though Mrs. Malcolm wept, she did not faint. In a little while she recovered; and begging pardon for an unseasonable exhibition of feeling, which, as she said, could only add to the trouble, not lessen it, she proceeded to tell him the story of Annie Dauris's flight.

To Ivor, who did not know Annie Dauris, but saw much in Mrs. Malcolm to draw forth his admiration and esteem, it came as a relief. He had feared for the lady herself; the girl's case, though pitiable in the extreme, was one of every day. She might not be found; Maurice Regan, even when found, might decline to acknowledge or assist her. But Ivor would do all that lay in his power.

He thanked Mrs. Malcolm for coming to him. It would save time if they drove at once to Mr. Philip Regan's and let him know the circumstances under which his brother's presence was immediately required. Hippolyta, who had anticipated all this, offered him a place in her carriage, and they set out.

'Shall you be leaving any of your work that requires to be finished?' said Hippolyta as soon as they were seated. 'I forgot to ask you before, I was so confused. Let me make it up to you if you are. I am rich,' she added, smiling rather mournfully,—'richer than I have any right to be.'

'You are very kind,' said Ivor; 'and I will let you know if anything of the sort happens before we have found Annie Dauris. But I, too, am richer than I ought to be. I have made money in unexpected ways, which I hoped to contribute towards the expenses of the "movement." But now I am cut off from the rest, I do not see my way to employing it profitably.'

'Why were you cut off?' asked Hippolyta; 'believe me, I do not ask in a spirit of feminine curiosity, but because, woman though I am, my relations with the various branches have been extensive, and I might be able to help you towards reinstatement.'

'You might do much,' he said, with his serious playfulness. 'No, my dear lady, unless a great change comes about in others—which is every day less likely—nothing can be done. If I could disclose the nature of my offences you would agree with me. They are the most serious, short of betrayal of secrets, that can be imagined. I am a lapsed heretic,' he went on half to himself, 'and fit only for the stake.'

It is next to impossible to carry on a conversation in any vehicle making its way through the streets of London; and but few words passed between Ivor and Hippolyta as they went towards St. Audry's. Their interview with Mr. Philip Regan was brief, and resulted only in their receiving the address of his brother Maurice's chambers. For, though as a clergyman he was properly and profoundly shocked, he seemed to take it as a matter of course that

Annie Dauris had been the tempter and Mr. Maurice Regan the tempted. He was too well acquainted, he said, with the character of young women of that class to have any doubt on the subject. It seemed to Hippolyta that she had come unexpectedly in contact with a Pharisee; and, although she had heard of his kindness to the poor, and knew he spent much of his time in visiting them, she could not help fancying that he looked on himself as exceedingly clean, and on those to whom he stooped as exceedingly the opposite. With scornful amusement she pictured the surprise and disgust which would have taken hold of this handsome, clean-shaven, scrupulously fitted-up ecclesiastic, had he learned what manner of woman it was that came to plead the cause of Annie Dauris within his gates. He would write to his brother, certainly; but he trusted that Mrs. Malcolm was quite sure of the facts on which she was now moving. Hippolyta replied immediately, 'I am sure that Annie has left home; I believe she is a ruined girl; and I have every reason to think that she has gone in search of Mr. Regan. All I ask of you is to inform that gentleman, if you know where to reach him, of the contents of Annie's letter. I suppose,' she added with some bitterness, 'it is only unbelievers like Mr. Mardol that think a woman as well worth saving as a man.' The clergyman bowed stiffly and led them to the door. He gave less credit to Annie Dauris's story than ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WRECKED!

SUCH was the first of her weary and fruitless journeys, undertaken by Hippolyta during that day and the next two or three, in search of her lost and fallen sister. Not finding Maurice Regan at his legal address—but, of course, they had not expected to find him there—Ivor sat down and wrote him a brief account of Annie's disappearance, requesting him to let her parents know if he was acquainted with her whereabouts, as the police were already engaged in searching for her; and if he were not, to take such steps as lay in his power towards her recovery from the danger into which she had plunged. The next point was to visit Charlotte Fraser, who either could not or would not give them any information, except the names of certain persons, lower than herself in the social scale, with whom Annie had been wont to consort. The places where these women abode did not seem fit for Mrs. Malcolm to approach. Ivor promised that he would make all needful inquiry, and let her know the result. She begged him to address her at the gardener's cottage; for, even in this crisis and bewilderment of her faculties, she was still uncertain whether Rupert would wish his friend to know that she lived at Forrest House. So far as Ivor was concerned she need have had no anxiety. He was ignorant of Rupert's connection with that red-brick mansion, as of the extent and situation of his property altogether, except that of the house in town at which he had once stayed.

They were three long and miserable days, while a bitter east wind was blowing under the darkened sky, and in

Hippolyta's heart there was a sense of growing distress and heaviness which she could not account for, even when she thought of the trouble in her friends' home. Certainly it was sad to look on Mrs. Dauris, now sinking into a state of perilous exhaustion, her appetite gone, and a severe headache and racking pains in the chest making her almost insensible to the cause which had brought her low. Annie's father was still more to be pitied. At times even his religious faith threatened to give way; he sat in mournful silence, or broke out into sharp words of reproach against his misguided child; and only Charlie's affection and thoughtful care prevented him from yielding to the demon which always lurks at such a season of misery near the threshold of the poor. It was the boy of eleven whose gentle earnestness kept the grown man from forgetting his sorrow in drink. But he had set his children a good example of which he was now, in Charlie's piety and devotedness, reaping the fruit. Mr. Dauris was a good man and a true Christian; he knew that he must not yield; but desperation was ever whispering that he might as well yield now as afterwards.

'You see,' he said, 'Mrs. Malcolm, we have done our best, but Annie has proved too much for us. Her mother will die; and what does it matter how I live? But yes,' interrupting himself, 'it does matter, and you do well to rebuke me with your looks. I beg your pardon. I ought to have more trust in the goodness of God.'

Hippolyta said all she could think of to comfort him. The struggle of such a man under temptation was dreadful to see. Could a foolish love in one young girl's bosom work so great harm? What a contrast between the happy, peaceful husband and wife, patient in spite of their trials, as they had appeared on her first knowing them, and the shattered home where every divine light seemed in danger of being quenched! The shock to this good man's virtue affected Hippolyta even more than the ruin of his happiness. 'It is little to be unhappy,' she thought, as she went away that evening; 'one may be unhappy, yet endure it. The horrible change is when one falls from the ideal and is willing to believe in universal disorder, as though it were no

use to hold by what is good.' She dwelt repeatedly on these things in her own mind while going to and fro next day in the haunts of Annie Dauris. She called on Ivor Mardol, hoping there might be some fresh intelligence. But there was none; and at the close of a weary afternoon, dismissing the cab which brought her to the bottom of Bransmere Road, she began to walk towards home.

'It seems very late,' she said to herself, pulling out her watch. It was just half-past seven. While she stopped to look at the time, for it was anything but a bright evening, she noticed that a number of persons were going by her up the Hill, and that no one was coming down. She looked round and found herself in the midst of a not inconsiderable crowd, all going apparently the same way. Some were well-dressed, but the greater number, both men and women, belonged to the labouring class, and many of them were thinly defended against the cold. Hippolyta walked on with them, wondering, in an absent, tired fashion what could be taking all these people past Forrest House. But her wonder ceased when she came to her own gate and saw that they were entering the church beyond. As she paused with her hand on the lock she heard the organ rolling out its solemn music, and perceived a dim light shining through the stained glass windows, the confused emblems of which she had tried to make out the first evening when Rupert quitted her. She was exhausted with the long day's work. The sense of loneliness and uncertainty which for some weeks past had been gaining on her was now at its height; and she felt in that dangerous mood when the slightest token, one way or another, determines a nature like Hippolyta's to make an experiment with the unknown, in the hope of finding what has been sought to so little purpose elsewhere. After reflecting for a moment she turned from her own gate, drew her furs about her, let down her veil, and followed into the church with the multitude.

It was already thronged, and Hippolyta had some difficulty in making her way through the narrow porch and past the still narrower doors which opened inside it, under a gallery at the west end. A few jets of gas, at long intervals, cast

their uncertain flickering light on the crowded benches at which the people were already kneeling, strings of beads in the hands of most. They were engaged, as it would seem, in public prayer, for a low monotonous hum, broken only by the click of the beads, ran from time to time through the building. Hippolyta could perceive, when she was able to find a place, that there were kneeling forms likewise in the chancel, which by that dim light seemed to be a great distance from the western porch. And they, too, from time to time, murmured something of which she could only gather the sound without being able to understand in what language it was spoken. A devout woman, seeing her standing up, made way for her at the end of a bench near the wall; and Hippolyta, unable now to move in advance or to retreat by the way she had come, judged it prudent to kneel like the others lest she should draw their attention. The monotonous prayer ceased; the people stood up and sang a hymn; the jets of gas were turned to their full height on both sides of the central aisle; and Hippolyta, raising her eyes, saw that an ecclesiastic, in a white surplice, and with an embroidered scarf over his shoulders, was standing in the pulpit about halfway between the altar and the west end of the church, waiting in silence till the people had taken their seats again and were quiet.

Now that the church was lighted up Hippolyta was able to judge of its extent, which, though not vast, like those of the immense cathedrals she had visited on the Continent, was considerable and imposing. It was built in a pure style of pointed architecture; and the clustered columns, with their slender shafts and deeply-wrought capitals, gave it an air of loveliness which enhanced the beauty of its proportions. On either side were chapels with lamps burning in front of their altars, while a profusion of statuary under niches seemed to betoken that the heavenly citizens were come down to dwell with their brethren on earth and offer them protection in exchange for homage. There were pictures here and there on the walls, but it was impossible for Hippolyta to make out the subjects. At the extreme end of the church a solitary lamp glowed crimson within the chancel. The stained imagery of the windows, luminous outside, was black and

indistinguishable viewed from within. Every nook and corner of the church now seemed filled with people like those Hippolyta had met coming up the Hill. It took them some little while to be seated and to have finished coughing. Meanwhile the preacher stood still with an open book on the desk before him, and a crucifix in his left hand.

He was by no means a striking figure, although the calm decision of the attitude in which he stood betokened something not quite commonplace. He seemed of about the average height, or a little more, with dark, close-clipped hair and beardless face, very dark steady eyes, and the worn expression of countenance which is so frequent in Roman Catholic saints of an ascetic type,—an expression to be rendered by some such phrase as 'fasting from earthly joys.' His hands were thin and nervous, brown rather than white, and now kept motionless, one resting on the edge of the pulpit, the other grasping the ebony cross on which glimmered the dead-pale figure of ivory. Amid a hush of perfect silence he stooped, took up the book, and gave out these words in a clear low voice: 'In the sixth chapter, twenty-third verse, of his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul has written, "The wages of sin"—he paused, seemed to lift the crucifix ever so little, and to let it fall as he uttered the conclusion of his text—"is death."'

There is nothing, there is everything, in the inflection of a human voice. Hippolyta's mental wanderings were arrested. This unknown man had as yet pronounced not a word of his own, and he was already speaking to her; his accents came close round her heart. Was there likely to be any wisdom with which he was conversant and which she had yet to learn? Impossible. Nevertheless she seemed to say to him under her breath, 'Speak on, what is your message?'

He was already speaking in the same searching, musical tones—slightly foreign she thought them—that gathered volume as he went on, and rose gradually to a steady height at which they seemed to float over the assembly. Not a word was wasted; clear and distinct each of them fell upon the ear and pierced into the spirit, carrying with it a sense of truth rather than of passion, of what must be said

because so things were, rather than of rhetoric framed to delight or to hold the fancy captive. Hippolyta could interpret their music, she could follow their eloquence. The doctrine, abounding in brief allusions as to things well known, she did not grasp. But again and again, when the preacher turned a swift glance to the crucifix and once more bent his eyes on the audience, it seemed to her that he as well as they, and they no less than he, were conscious of an awful presence wherein whatever he said took on it the impress of eternal, absolute truth.

He spoke of their gathering that night as to an enrolment on the eve of battle. They were to range themselves under a standard, to take the oath of allegiance to a captain, and to look the campaign in the face on which they were entering. How should they choose if they knew not the difference between the contending causes? Let them not enrol themselves except in the light of knowledge and as prepared for the extremities of war. They must be ready to submit to the event, for it was not here as in the battling of earthly powers, where quarter was given, prisoners taken alive, and a peace made at the end. Each party would inflict on the other all it could of defeat and disaster. This at any rate was sure. Would they ask proof at his hands? He held forth the crucifix. Such, he repeated in grave emphatic terms, was the culminating victory of the powers of evil, which they wrought upon the leader of the hostile array. They stripped and scourged Him; they made Him an open shame; they reft Him of friends, followers, admirers, so that He fell down wounded and alone under the shadow of death; and as He lay a helpless captive they did with Him what they would, flouting and mocking His pretended majesty with the purple rags of kingship and a crown of wild brier. He made no complaint; He was but enduring what a man must expect from his enemies. It was the fortune of war. Neither did He beg their mercy when they smote Him through with nails and fastened His dying body to the Cross; what else should they, being the powers of darkness, do with one that could never own their dominion or be their friend? He stretched out His hands to the hammer which drove in the spikes, He bowed His

head, the thorny wreath wounding it, upon the pillow they had made for Him. 'Was that all?' asked the preacher, as he looked round upon the silent audience. 'Was the cup drained to the dregs? Not so; there remained a bitter draught, compared with which all bodily pain was little. From His Cross Jesus, opening His eyes on the world, meditating on the years He had spent, saw words and works alike frustrate, the good defeated, evil triumphant; power, and wealth, and dominion, and knowledge, and religion itself, in the service of a lie. He was hanging on the Cross, not worshipped on the throne of the world. Why? Because the world was Satan's and all it contained. Therefore Christ was made an outcast, and His efforts came to naught. Suffering and death were the penalty of rebelling against the dominion of crowned and sceptred evil. In this sense, too, the wages of sin is death. To resist sin is to die.'

Hippolyta listened as to the opening bars of a symphony which unlocks the feeling and brings into vivid presentment vague thoughts one has had for years—thoughts that have wandered formless through the heavens like an unseen vapour which is not yet capable of taking the appearance of a rain-cloud. What were the powers of evil which had the sovereignty of lower things? Were there any such? or was it a parable for the unlearned to which she was thus giving ear?

The preacher, who seemed to be uttering thoughts given to him at that very instant, resumed. With the passion and death of his Master he bound up the misery, degradation, pain, anguish, torture, disappointment, of every human life. He might, like Hippolyta, have been dwelling in the deeps with those to whom light and hope were denied. His voice trembled and grew husky, his eyes filled with tears. 'Sorrow is universal,' he cried; 'it is like the air of heaven, we cannot live out of it. And what shall we say? Has it no meaning, no purpose?' A mild light kindled in his eyes. 'Brethren,' he went on, as under the inspiration of a loftier spirit, 'it has a meaning and a purpose. Its meaning is the moral of the Cross—the wages of sin; its purpose is the triumph of the Cross, it is redemption.' And soaring up into the unseen, which alone, as he de-

clared, is true and everlasting, he exalted that life of Christ, that heavenly existence, which began with His defeat and death on Calvary. 'Was there,' he asked, 'any other way of winning mankind, or of overcoming the powers of darkness save by this supreme resignation? And who was it that failed and suffered loss in the battle which cost Jesus of Nazareth His life, His earthly honour, His glory, nay, the very peace of His human soul? Was it Jesus or Satan that came to naught on that day?' Then, enlarging on this strange philosophy, he showed how sin, the one absolute disorder, brings with it all others, and is from the first an admission of defeat; how it untunes the universe. While goodness, which has the promise of life in itself, cannot die. The triumph of time is for the powers that have no dominion beyond it, but can only look for a certain dreadful coming of judgment when time is past; the good alone does not, cannot perish, but is everlasting. And again he asked in piercing tones, with his eyes on the emblem which he seemed to study as a book, 'Is Jesus dead? or does He not give the mightiest token of life by making all those live that believe in Him? They conquer themselves by His indwelling spirit; and when a man has become his own captive, he has subdued the world. Christ reigns in hearts innumerable of men and women; on them, as on Him, sin has done its worst; it has inflicted death, not once, but every time the cup of pitiless suffering has been held to their lips. But can it do more? The pain which destroys only this lower happiness has become, for such, redemption without end.'

Then he depicted, with forcible and gloomy eloquence, the lot of those who, shrinking from earthly pain, have chosen sin and its eternal remorse. At the foot of Calvary he seemed to open the bottomless pit wherein all they dwelt to whom the harmony of God's law was turned to discord. These were the martyrs of evil who made their own hell; no God made it, but they themselves, lighting up in their own breasts the fire they could never put out. The wages of sin? What were the wages of hatred, envy, drunkenness, unhallowed love, indulgence of self-will? And was there any principle anywhere that could so change the

nature of things as to hinder these from having their consequences? To resist sin was to suffer a momentary death, to enter heaven, like St. Laurence, through a curtain of fire; to yield to it was to take into one's bosom the seed of everlasting death, and to dwell in the world of horror we had created for our Paradise. Would they choose Christ with His Cross or Satan with his fiery crown? There was no halting or being neutral on this battlefield; to be neutral was to be defeated ere a blow had been struck.

For a long while, Hippolyta thought, the voice continued in this strain; but though its sound fell upon her ears she was not hearkening. She had heard enough. Sitting there alone, unfriended, and worn out with her three days' searching, she felt like one that, watching from the deck of a deserted vessel, beholds the dawn breaking over a wintry and wreck-strewn sea. The illusions of life were at an end. She was wounded to the heart's core. Had she, then, chosen hitherto the service of darkness, imagining that it would usher in the kingdom of light? She remembered the text of her own gospel, taken from Goethe, *Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen fest zu leben.* If the preacher were not wholly wrong, what a mockery it was? Not order but disorder; not good but evil; not the beautiful, but this monstrous thing called sin—such had been the deities worshipped in her ignorance. She bowed her head in her hands and wept hot tears beneath her veil.

Suddenly, while the voice of the preacher still resounded in the pulpit, Hippolyta saw the vast congregation rising to their feet. Innumerable lights twinkled over the church; almost every one present held a taper which seemed to have been lit at a preconcerted signal. The preacher's face was half-turned away to the high altar. Hippolyta, doing mechanically like the others, rose from her seat; and the devout woman next to whom she had been sitting put a lighted taper into her hand, which, not knowing why, she held aloft as she saw them all doing. The people began, with the thunder of their many voices, to repeat a solemn formula after the priest; and Hippolyta, her ear more accustomed to what was going forward, could now distinguish words renouncing evil and dedicating those who

uttered them to the service and the Cross of their Redeemer. She could not join in the words, but her tears fell fast. The good woman near looked at her very kindly. And while she was endeavouring to conceal her emotion, she happened to look across the church, and there, not a long way from the pulpit, she saw William Dauris standing with a taper in his hand, not bowed down with sorrow as when she parted from him the evening before, but erect and firm in attitude, repeating the words of dedication and renouncement, while the tears ran down his cheeks. A sense of thankfulness relieved the fulness of Hippolyta's heart; if she, too, continued weeping it was not with such extreme desolation. There was one, at least, who had vanquished his great enemy.

She could not tell what followed; her mind was all absorbed. The twinkling tapers were put out; lights appeared far away in the chancel blazing over the high altar and around it; figures in strange raiment came and went; the smoke of incense ascended clouding the lights; and music seemed to be filling the high roof above and rolling its waves on every side. It did not soothe, it excited her. She became conscious that she was meditating a daring resolution. At that moment she thought of no one but herself and the Form that seemed to be gazing at her still from the crucifix. There was an interval of intense stillness; the organ had stopped, all heads were bent, and she saw something—she could not tell what—going forward at the altar. Thrice she heard the tinkle of an unseen bell; and the music broke out again. Then the congregation rose from their kneeling posture and began to move down the aisles towards the door. Many of the gas-jets were turned off; but one or another in Hippolyta's neighbourhood was still kept burning. She knelt and covered her face with her hands. Deep thought kept her immovable.

But ere long, when she lifted her head, she saw the preacher in his black habit and white surplice coming with rapid step down the church towards where she was kneeling. When he had arrived within a few paces of her, he turned and opened the half-doors of a tall upright construction in dark wood, which somewhat marred the architectural beauty

of the Gothic building and reminded Hippolyta of the confessionals to which she had on one or two occasions seen people resorting in the churches of Paris and Rome. It was, no doubt, a confessional. She watched the ecclesiastic enter and fasten the doors after him; she heard the click with which he drew aside something within; and she saw a man and a woman take up their position at each side, where a curtain more than half-concealed the kneeling figures. After a while one of them rose and went away, followed, at no great interval, by the other. No fresh arrivals came; and the priest, opening one of the upper partitions into which the doors were divided, looked out into the church and saw Hippolyta. She was kneeling still. He drew back, opened the other partition, and appeared as if sitting in a tribunal waiting till Hippolyta should come. As the fancy struck her she rose hastily, and without considering what she was doing, threw herself on her knees in the confessional. There was a wire grating between her and the priest; and all she could make out was the glimmering of his white surplice. In an almost inaudible whisper he muttered some words, the sense of which was lost on her. She did not speak; and after that one brief sentence neither for a time did he. At last, finding her so silent, he bent his head near the grating and said very distinctly, 'Will you not tell me, my child, when was your last confession?'

'I don't know,' replied Hippolyta, confused; 'I am not of your Church. I am of no Church. I am not a Christian.'

'Poor child,' said the priest, more grieved apparently than astonished; 'why do you say you are not a Christian? Have you been unfaithful to your baptism? So have we all.'

Hippolyta felt encouraged by his calmness. But what had she to say?

'I have never been baptized,' she answered. 'I do not believe in the Christian creed. But I am in such trouble; and what you said to-night made me think——' There was no possibility of going on, she was so agitated. The priest heard her sobbing.

'Yes,' he said very gently after a while, 'it made you think? What did it make you think? Tell me.'

'Oh,' she replied wildly, 'I am one of those that have chosen the wrong side. Is there not a woman in your Gospels named Magdalene? I have been, I am now, a Magdalene.'

'Do you mean, my poor sister,' he said in the same calm voice, like that of a physician at the bedside of a patient, 'that you are living in sin?'

'I mean,' was the answer given with heaving breath, 'that I have scorned to believe in marriage, and have thought love by itself enough. My husband is not my husband; I would not let him marry me.'

'Was he willing to marry you?' inquired the priest.

'Yes, yes,' she said, weeping again; 'it is all my fault. It was I, in my pride and foolishness, that persuaded him to do evil. How shall I repair it? What must I do?'

'You must repent,' answered the priest gravely, 'as Magdalene repented of a lesser fault. For she yielded to passion; and you, my sister, have perverted the very principle on which purity and all human affections rest.'

'How did Magdalene repent?' said Hippolyta, with a sudden flush upon her face which made itself felt in the darkness. 'Tell me, for the love of good, what did she do?'

The answer came slow and distinct, 'She followed Christ to Calvary and clung to His Cross. She lived and died for Him.'

When Hippolyta heard these words she waited for no more. Rising and turning from the confessional, she ran with a lightning-like speed to the door, and was lost in the night.

The priest looked sorrowfully after her fleeting figure and shook his head. What would become of the strange penitent?

. . . . . .

Hippolyta did not go far. At first the violent agitation of her spirits made it seem stifling to enter a house, and she walked down the Hill until she reached the turn where it became the London Road. It was a cold raw evening,

and chilled her to the bone; but the physical discomfort did her good by recalling her to the things of the lower world; and after wandering for some half hour, she retraced her steps till she arrived at her own door. It was open, and the housekeeper, who appeared to have just come in, was taking some letters out of the letter-box, which, on seeing her mistress, she handed to her. Hippolyta looked at one of them. It was in her father's handwriting, redirected from Falside. The other was from Rupert. On seeing it a terrible feeling of sickness and misery took possession of her whole being. She stood under the lamp which hung in the middle of the hall ceiling, tore open the enclosure, and read its contents. They were brief. Rupert, in his usual tone of devoted affection, announced that he should be coming up to London that very day, but should arrive too late to come on to Forrest House. He would settle some little business next morning as early as possible, and she might expect him, at latest, by twelve o'clock. Hippolyta shivered, put the letter in her pocket, and on Mrs. Leeming's inquiry whether she would now dine, as it was getting late, she merely shook her head, and went slowly upstairs to her room, in which lights were burning. When she reached it she looked round as if in search of some object. What it was soon appeared. Among the many costly ivories with which her boudoir was decked Hippolyta had one day noticed a crucifix of exceedingly noble and finished execution, due probably to the hand of a Flemish artist of the Renaissance. An instinct had led her to take it down from the wall where it was hanging, and put it away out of sight in a drawer. She had a touch, if not more, of that dislike for seeing the emblem of sorrow continually before one's eyes which has distinguished various poets and poetic natures of the century; but whether it was that or something deeper which had prompted her to hide it long ago—what a weary time it seemed—she would have been unable to say. Now she took it out again, and set it up where the strong and steady light of a lamp would fall upon it. Her next action was to lock the door of her chamber and draw the curtains across the window, so as to shut out the view of the garden,—a measure hardly needed, for the

darkness outside was very great. Not a breath of wind stirred among the dry branches or the foliage of the evergreens. In the house, as all round, a perfect stillness reigned.

And in the silent night, amid the solitude of her own room, Hippolyta paced up and down, hour after hour, with the same intense self-concentration, the same sense that time was flying on the wings of night never to return, the same overwhelming dread of the morrow, which the condemned criminal must have in his prison-cell when that morrow is to see him die. Her thoughts were deep, confused, and overwhelming, recurring ever to the one theme which the preacher had handled with such portentous effect, —the guilt, the awfulness of breaking through the divine order. She had been so confident of her cause; and it was her cause that had turned against her. To spread the light had ever appeared the only ambition worthy of her heroic soul; but the light in her was deceptive, a mere marsh-light guiding to ruin. Instead of mounting the heights to which she aspired, she had flung herself into the mire, and she was now become an object of loathing to every honest man and woman. She, Hippolyta Valence, so conscious, so proud of her rectitude, was fallen, polluted, horrible to think upon like the women whom she had styled, in the excess of a self-admiring sympathy, her sisters. The revelation of sin as no phantom, or superstition, or conventional metaphor, but a foul and loathsome reality, had come upon her like a whirlwind blackening the sky. Sin, the most unwomanly, the least admitting of excuse or palliation, was it then become a part of her being, a record in the past never to be blotted out? As in her mind she went over these things again and again, questioning, denying, admitting, shrinking from herself, yet not knowing how to escape into the sweet fresh air that, after she had been breathing it for so many months, had suddenly changed to miasma, her feeling was like that of a trapped wild beast; she could have raged against herself, and in the fury of her disdain rushed upon death as a relief. She turned with the thought of it flaming in her eyes; but the steady light still showed her the crucifix, and when her gaze went out

to it, she remembered the words which described it as the image of supreme resignation. To kill herself would not be resignation or victory; it would be pride and defeat. What though she had fallen, might she not rise again? 'Oh never, never,' she cried in her anguish; 'the snow has been trodden into mud, the ermine is stained.' Tears had been given in the church to ease her overflowing heart; but now she had no tears. The sweet short dream of delight was over. She might in a few hours go forward to meet Rupert Glanville with a smile on her face, concealing the canker-worm within. Did she choose to follow a desperate course, she might still feed upon the honey of these poisoned flowers and dare retribution. But where was the tranquillity of heart, the peace and loving security, which, as she now perceived, had been the foundation of her previous happiness? Gone, gone, never to return. Conscience had inflicted a deadly wound upon her, and she hung writhing on the spear. The hours fled on.

But why believe in what she had heard by accident? What was there in common between Hippolyta Valence and this religion that so imperiously divided the light from the darkness? There was no Satan, and Christ was dead and buried many ages ago. Suppose it a fable, a children's story, an arabesque on the skirt of the eternal night. Alas! it was impossible. Her sin had found her out; to lapse into the delusion of innocence was beyond her for evermore. In this fearful noonday glare she beheld the stain, as though it were the spilt blood of murder, spreading over her soul and soaking into it, deep, deep. When the murderer dipped his hands in water, they were none the less polluted, but the water became crimson, mixed with the blood that fell into it. So, she went on saying to herself, it would be with marriage following on the loss of innocence; it could not bring back what was lost, it could only suffer degradation because of it. A woman was either angel or demon; she must be pure or impure. 'And what am I?' said Hippolyta, shuddering, as in her pacing to and fro she came to a standstill before that silent figure on the Cross.

Her anguish became unendurable. She threw open the

window and looked out. All was dark and wintry. Through the stained glass of the lancet nearest her she seemed to distinguish a faint gleam as of a light still burning somewhere in the church. There were lamps, perhaps, that kept in all night. She could not imagine any one was there at such an hour, past one o'clock. Not a star was to be seen in the sky. 'How like it is to this life of mine!' she murmured with a sigh, as she closed the window and drew the curtain again. But a voice within seemed to make reply, 'Have you deserved the guidance of a star, when you have been wilful, headstrong, confident in the strength of your own knowledge?' and she was compelled to make a confession, as humiliating as it was salutary, that she had dreamt of being a sufficient light to herself. And what, in those arrogant days, had she known of the mighty, mysterious world? Now the veil was withdrawn, the tragic prospect clear. She had been made to fix her thoughts, her eyes, her memory, on the existences which were governed by passionate, evanescent impulses, whether of love or hate; the blind world of instinct, she saw, stood in need of a divine reason to overrule its manifold contradictory tendencies. Was it not the same with the blind world of man? And how much blinder had she proved herself than those in whom ignorance was the outcome of incapacity or lack of education? Hers had been wanton, self-asserting, criminal. Was Annie Dauris not saved? Whose sin was that but Hippolyta's. Was Rupert, the generous, confiding, devoted Rupert, lowered in his own eyes, turned from the path of happiness and honour, made to share in turpitude of which he had never dreamt? Whose sin, whose unpardonable, damning sin was that but Hippolyta's? Could the murderer, the suicide, have done worse?

Thinking these accusing thoughts, seeing these horrible shadows trooping around her, discerning no way of escape, with an impetuous burst of tears Hippolyta cast herself prostrate on the ground before the crucifix, crying aloud again and again, amid the solitude of the dismal winter night, 'Oh thou unknown Christ, have pity on me!'

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It was nearly twelve o'clock at noon, and the sun was

shining high and bright in the heavens, when Rupert Glanville, his face radiant with love and happiness, dashed up in a hansom cab to the gates of Forrest House. He sprang out hastily, dismissed the cabman, and ran as if wings were carrying him along the garden path into the hall. When the housekeeper saw him she turned red and pale. 'Where is Mrs. Malcolm?' he cried gaily. 'Is she in her room?' The housekeeper stood motionless, looked at him compassionately, and made no reply. He was struck with her silence, and his mood altered. 'Answer, woman,' he said sternly. 'Why are you standing there like an idiot?' She put up her hand with a pitying gesture, and faltered out, 'Oh, sir, Mrs. Malcolm is gone.'—'Gone!' he repeated in amaze. 'What do you mean? Gone where?' Then she told him that on sending the maid as usual to wake her mistress that morning, the girl had found the door of her bedroom wide open, the bed not slept in, and Mrs. Malcolm not there. It was seven o'clock when they missed her. They had searched all over the house and in the garden; they had sent to William Dauris, but all in vain. Not a trace of her was to be discovered. She seemed to have taken nothing with her but her cloak and hat.

Rupert ran madly upstairs, rushed into Hippolyta's boudoir, saw that everything was in perfect order as the servants had told him, and looked round like a man bewildered when he found no Hippolyta there. What had become of her? Was it a dream? He went by a natural instinct to her writing-table and examined the papers lying on it. They were of no importance; they yielded no clue. But the blotting-book was wide open, and a sealed envelope with his initials outside caught his eye. As he tore it crosswise, in his eagerness, a plain gold ring fell out which he had induced Hippolyta to wear as Mrs. Malcolm, and round it a slip of paper. Written on the latter, in a trembling hand, were only these words, 'Rupert, we must part; do not seek me.' It was too true. Hippolyta had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIX

LIKE MADNESS IN THE BRAIN

THE blow which had thus been struck at the heart of Rupert Glanville was so unexpected, and its occasion so wrapt in mystery, that the young man, on reading Hippolyta's brief sentence, announcing as it should seem an everlasting farewell, refused to believe and stood there incapable of realising it. His face was calm as that of a man who has just been shot dead. Hippolyta vanished? But why? he asked himself again. She must have simply been called away by a sudden emergency; she would return in a few hours; or she had heard from Colonel Valence and he was in danger, dying perhaps, and in need of his daughter's presence. Surely it was that which, giving her an overwhelming shock, had disturbed her reason; that or the attack of disease alone could have made her set down those few wild words which he read again and again, vainly striving to make them tell more than their own meaning. He drew a chair to the writing-table, and sat down by it, looking out of the window in a dazed and helpless fashion, not able to think or to act, every faculty benumbed and a weight like ice in his bosom. The entrance of the housekeeper roused him as from a stupor. Ought they to do anything? Had Mr. Malcolm any orders to give? Rupert laughed sardonically on hearing the name which had gone with his golden honeymoon. It was nine months, almost to the day, since he brought Hippolyta from his studio to Forrest House. Nine months! good heavens, how happy they had been, how swift to come and go, like a broad stream of sunshine losing itself in the smiling ocean! It was all over. 'A dream, a dream,' he

murmured to himself. Or was he dreaming now? The housekeeper spoke again; and he gave a start at the sound of a strange voice in Hippolyta's boudoir. He had forgotten that any one was there. 'What did you say?' he inquired, passing his hand over his forehead. Orders! No, he had no orders to give; and he turned over the scrap of paper which he held between his fingers, vaguely imagining there might be some message on the back which he had not seen, to say that it was all a jest, all make-believe, and Hippolyta would come ere the day was spent. There was nothing except the fatal sentences written on the paper; he knew it before he looked. But this slight action brought him to himself. Hippolyta must have been seen when she went away; if not by the servants, yet by those who were passing along the street, by the neighbours, the police, by whatever people might be about in the early morning. What if a misfortune to her father had driven her out of her mind, and she were wandering somewhere without any one to take care of her! The thought was terrible, inciting him to lose no time in seeking her traces, and allowing him, till she should be found, to believe that she had not known what she was doing when she wrote him farewell. Was it not a symptom of madness that people turned against those they loved most dearly, and fled from them? This appalling comfort that Hippolyta might be out of her mind was a sad testimony to the overthrow of Rupert's happiness. 'Why, oh why,' he cried in despair, 'did I not come on last night instead of lingering in town? I should have noticed the change and ascertained the cause of it; a few hours would have made all the difference. We could have called in a physician, set some one to watch over her to see that she did not stray away by herself. But let us do what we can and not delay.' He was eager and active now; the stupor had passed for a while, because a ray of hope seemed to be dawning again. The more he considered the stronger he found those evidences of Hippolyta's mental aberration which the circumstances of her flight seemed to give. She had not taken anything with her in the shape of money or clothing; she had made no preparations for a journey, long or short. Her books, correspondence, wardrobe, were all

in perfect order, as Mrs. Leeming had seen them only the day before. There was no sign of hurry or confusion in the room, nothing out of place, except in that pleasant way which betokened that some one had made a home of it. The note she had received from Rupert and had read in the hall when she came in last night was lying on her dressing-table with her keys. Only her hat and cloak were gone. Rupert questioned the servants closely. Had any one found a door or window open that morning? No, but the housemaid, on going to unbolt the front door, was astonished to observe that it was unfastened. Some one must or might have left the house that way; all other means of exit were as they had been left the last thing at night.

Had Mrs. Malcolm appeared in any way strange during the past few days? Had she received letters, or heard agitating news, or done or said anything unusual? In answer to these inquiries the housekeeper mentioned the two letters received last night, told what she knew of the trouble and flight of Annie Dauris, and of Hippolyta's anxiety to discover and bring her back. The girl, she added, was not yet found; neither did they seem aware at the gardener's cottage of anything peculiar in Mrs. Malcolm's conduct. They were very much attached to her, and she had displayed great kindness towards them. Rupert sent for William Dauris. The gardener came immediately, with an expression of intense sorrow in his countenance, and so deeply grieved on hearing of Hippolyta's disappearance from home that he could hardly reply to the questions which Rupert addressed to him. He was evidently as much in the dark as any one else. He could not think so feeling a lady as Mrs. Malcolm would have set out on a long journey, especially if it was connected with his daughter, and not come to say good-bye, or at least send them word that she had found a clue. She had certainly been much troubled when she heard of Annie's misbehaviour; he knew that she had made inquiries everywhere, and had even gone into the East End herself to help them on. How did she go, Rupert asked, by what conveyance? William Dauris could not say; he thought the coachman had driven her. The coachman was sent for, and gave his account, which

was not much. It had been Mrs. Malcolm's custom to have herself driven a couple of miles along the London Road and then dismiss him. He believed that she often engaged a cab to take her much farther, into town, he supposed. But he had never driven farther himself except three days ago, when she told him to take her to an address in Grafton Place, Strand,—a Mr. Mardol's,—and afterwards——

Rupert almost leaped out of the chair in which he was sitting. 'What name did you say?' he cried. 'Mr. Mardol's? Grafton Place? Are you sure?'

The coachman was quite sure. Not only had he asked Mrs. Malcolm the address twice over, but he heard Mr. Mardol's name several times when he drove on to the East End, whither Mrs. Malcolm was accompanied by a gentleman from Grafton Place.

'Oh, I see now,' exclaimed Rupert with a sigh of relief; 'it will all come clear. 'Thank you, Thomson, thank you; you have given me the clue I wanted. Why did you not inform me at once?'

Thomson had not felt certain that it mattered, or he would have spoken. He knew the house in Grafton Place, and the other off Saffron Hill. If Mr. Malcolm wished to see them himself, he could get the brougham ready at once.

'Right, quite right, Thomson,' said his master; 'be quick about it. I will drive to Grafton Place. Mr. Mardol is a friend of mine. There has been some misunderstanding, I suppose; that is all. It is nothing, nothing. Only look about you. I shall be waiting till you come.'

The coachman departed on his errand; and William Dauris, who had been standing silently near during this conversation, took heart again on seeing how Rupert's face brightened. He appeared like a changed man.

'Then we shall have Mrs. Malcolm back?' said the gardener timidly.

'Oh, never fear,' replied Rupert, shaking him warmly by the hand; 'back this evening, no doubt. Ladies will give us these frightenings now and then,' he said, smiling as one does to assure friends that one has escaped a great peril.

'I am very glad,' said William, 'and so will my wife

be when I tell her. She has been crying ever since the housekeeper brought us the bad news.'

He said no more, but went away quietly. Rupert, who had not taken off the travelling wraps in which he had alighted from the hansom, walked from the front door to the gate and back again, up and down the garden path, till the brougham came in sight. He at once ran to meet it, leaped in, and told the coachman to use his utmost speed till they reached Grafton Place. He would willingly have galloped with the horses, so great was his excitement. To have done with the journey and clasp Hippolyta in his arms again—he could think of nothing else. He would forgive her at the first word; but she must never so frighten him again.

In the midst of these disjointed reflections the thought presented itself, 'But suppose she were not in Grafton Place?' Why, he replied at once to himself, he had not fancied she would be there; at least it could not signify; Ivor would know where she was, what motive had induced her to leave home suddenly, and in what frame of mind she had come to him. The reason of their meeting was plain enough. Ivor, Hippolyta, and Colonel Valence were all mixed up in that mad revolutionary movement which appeared to delight in these mysterious vanishings and trap-door scenes; there had been some plan afoot, and Hippolyta was required to take part in it. 'But,' said Rupert, in a gayer mood now that he was going to see her very soon, 'I shall not allow this doctrine of blind obedience to come between husband and wife. The next time Hippolyta sets out on a humanitarian expedition she shall take me with her, or I will know the reason why.'

The drive was horribly long, but it could not last for ever. At a little distance from the house Rupert pulled the check-string and got out. It might be an alarm or a warning to the conspirators, as he termed Ivor and Hippolyta in his recovered good-humour, if the carriage were to drive up to the door. Bidding Thomson, therefore, wait round the corner, he walked on briskly to his friend's house, with which he was familiar from of old, and rang the bell as quietly as the agitation of his nerves would let

him. The door was not opened at once. 'Ah,' he said under his breath, 'Ivor is cautious; he perhaps wishes to reconnoitre before parleying with the enemy. I will pay him out for this.' He had hardly got the words out of his mouth when Ivor opened the door. 'What, you, Rupert!' he cried joyously; 'who in the world would have thought it? Come in, my dear boy, and let me look at you. I have been working at high pressure to make up for lost time. That is why I did not come at once; I was busy.'

And with delight overspreading his rugged features Ivor, lifting the curtain of stamped leather with one hand, pushed Rupert gently forward with the other into his work-room. A lad, who happened to be assisting him, retired at the sight of a stranger through another exit. Rupert was half-minded to call him back. He dreaded some trick of collusion, he knew not why. Ivor had never deceived him in his life; but in the present excitement suspicion caught at a film of gossamer. The boy disappeared; and Rupert, who could endure the suspense no longer, turned at once on his friend without preface or introduction, and cried, 'Where is Miss Valence, Ivor?'

Ivor stared at him. 'Miss Valence?' he repeated. He seemed quite lost. Rupert thought he was dissembling, and he could not bear it. 'Yes, Miss Valence,' reiterated the artist in an angry voice. 'Come now, tell me what you have done with her.' And he took Ivor by the shoulder.

The astonishment of the latter increased. 'But, my dear fellow,' he said, looking for an explanation of this strange scene in Rupert's eyes, 'I don't know who Miss Valence is. I never heard her name in my life.'

Rupert turned white with passion. 'Never heard her name,' he exclaimed, 'and she was with you three days ago, and you went with her to Saffron Hill. Shame on you, Ivor; how can you tell me so?'

Ivor was bewildered still, but not quite so much.

'Indeed!' was his reply, 'so that is the lady's real name. I thought there must be something.' And then, turning to Rupert, 'I give you my word this is the first I ever heard of a Miss Valence. The lady who came here three

days ago announced herself as Mrs. Malcolm. It appears that she gave a false name.'

Rupert, listening impatiently, was now bewildered in his turn. He said slowly, 'My dear Ivor, you surely knew the name of Miss Valence, Colonel Valence's daughter?'

'Neither Miss Valence nor Colonel Valence, as I am an honest engraver,' said his friend; 'you must be dreaming, Rupert. What has come over you this morning?' He made Glanville sit down, and, in drawing him towards the light, was disconcerted at seeing the ashy paleness of his cheek.

'What in Heaven's name is it?' he inquired with anxious affection. Rupert kept studying every expression that passed over his friend's features, anticipating, somehow, that the mask would fall and the truth declare itself. But Ivor looked the soul of candour and innocence. The artist was staggered. He sat up, pulled himself together with an effort, and said, with an imploring accent in each of his words:

'Do be frank with me. You must know Miss Valence and her father. They are Socialists like yourself; and I believe you have already received communications from them, although I never spoke to you about them. The lady that came here—you knew she was Miss Valence.'

'I declare to you solemnly,' said Ivor, 'I knew no such thing. The first time I set eyes on her was three months ago, by mere accident as it seemed, in Denzil Lane, as I was coming out of a house where I had been on business. She told me her name was Mrs. Malcolm, and——' he hesitated for a moment, but continued deliberately, 'I also learned, though I ought not to tell you so, that she belonged to our society. More than that I neither know nor desired to know. What you say about previous communications is impossible. Who *is* Miss Valence, then, and why does she go by another name?'

Unless Ivor was playing a part with unparalleled *sang froid* and equal heartlessness, he must be speaking the truth. Still, he was not his own master; there might be an obligation among Socialists to deceive one's dearest

friends for the good of the society, thought Rupert; and in that case it would be in vain to persevere with his questions. The fear of losing Hippolyta returned with horrible force. He must try again.

'I don't wish to inquire into your secrets, Ivor,' he began mildly; 'I have always respected them. Only tell me where Mrs. Malcolm is,—let us call her Mrs. Malcolm, we need not quarrel over a name,—tell me how I can send her a message, and I will thank you from the bottom of my heart.'

There was the sound of tears in his voice.

Ivor, if not sincere, was a consummate villain, who did not need to learn from the greatest how to tear his friend's heart. He stood seemingly in the uttermost bewilderment, incapable of answering a word, and trying to make sense of what had just been spoken by Rupert. When at length he found his voice he did but mutter, 'Miss Valence, Mrs. Malcolm?' as though the two names were a subject of unmixed surprise and perplexity to him. Nay, the sight of Rupert's affliction moved him almost to tears, and he said, forgetting apparently what had been asked by the latter:

'Is there any reason why you should take this deep interest in the lady? If it is one you can confide to me, I will do all in my power towards discovering her, as I understand from you that she is no longer to be found. I was utterly ignorant that you cared for any woman, Rupert.'

The artist's suspicions were not to be laid by kindness. He knew only too well that Hippolyta had conveyed the message to Ivor Mardol, which compelled him to quit Trelingham on a secret expedition. This questioning about his own interest in Miss Valence was to throw him off the scent. He cursed Socialism and the revolutionary ideas which made a friend like Ivor disloyal, as he answered:

'What my reason may be for inquiring about Mrs. Malcolm signifies to no one but myself. I want to know where she is, and I believe you could inform me, if it was not for some oath or other you have taken. Will you do so, or are we to break off our friendship here and now?'

'Rupert, my dear Rupert, what madness has come over you?' exclaimed Ivor in unfeigned distress. 'I cannot do more than assure you that three months ago Mrs. Malcolm was a perfect stranger to me, that I have never known her address, and that I know it now as little as you do.'

'And Miss Valence brought you no message when you were living at Trelingham, in the chalet?' inquired Rupert with intense sternness.

'None whatever,' replied Ivor; 'the message I received, and which I remember you saw, came from——' he paused.

'From whom?' said Rupert.

'I must say no more about it. These things are really secret, and they do not concern you, Rupert, nor yet Miss Valence. I implore you to let the matter drop.'

'Very well,' said Glanville sullenly, rising as he spoke. 'Then here we say good-bye, and that is the end of an old song.'

He went to the door. Ivor followed. 'You are not going for good, are you, old fellow?' he said tremulously, endeavouring to detain him.

'Yes, I am,' he returned, shaking off the hand that was laid affectionately on his arm. 'This is the last you will see of me.'

He threw open the front door and walked into the street. Ivor, wounded in his deepest feelings, and more sensitive to the change in Rupert's affection than to the affront he had received, stood on the threshold watching him till he turned the corner. It would be no use calling him back while he was in such a mood. Ivor shut the door, went back to his workroom and took up the plate on which he was engaged. He could not go on with it; his thoughts were all abroad, and his fingers would not serve him. After nearly a year's absence to meet and part like this! Rupert was not a good correspondent, resembling in that particular most men of genius, who find occupation without difficulty, and are loth to forego present delights for the monotonous work of recording the incidents of the day. But few letters, therefore, had passed between these friends; and the nature of Ivor's cosmopolitan interests on the one side, combined

with Rupert's desire to conceal Hippolyta's residence and way of living on the other, had made intimate correspondence difficult, if not impossible. Love is the sworn foe of friendship, and puts out lesser lights, as the sun quenches the stars. Nor is cosmopolitan or religious enthusiasm, which you cannot share with a friend, less likely to estrange you from him. In spite of all this, the devotion of Rupert to Ivor was intense and heartfelt; while Ivor would have sacrificed their friendship to nothing less sacred than a sense of duty. Had he done so now? His confession or the discovery of Hippolyta alone could decide.

So Rupert might have argued in cold blood. But his blood was not cold; it was boiling in his veins as he walked away in search of the brougham, convinced that Ivor had sheltered Hippolyta or was conversant with her design in quitting Forrest House. At that instant he cared not a jot for any man's friendship; and he flung Ivor's from him as a thing soiled and worthless. He would be his own friend and seek Hippolyta till he found her. Who was the other she had called on? Thomson would know. He stopped the carriage, which was slowly moving up and down, and before he entered it, made the coachman repeat what he had begun to say in the morning about driving Mrs. Malcolm to some place near Saffron Hill. Thomson had a good local memory, and knew the street near St. Audry's Church. He had seen the clergyman, also, as he was handing Mrs. Malcolm to her carriage. Rupert told him to drive thither. He could not conceive how a clergyman should come into the story; but it was so mad a world, and the rage of new opinions had spread into such unsuspected quarters, that his surprise by no means equalled his determination to find out the share which this apparently socialistic preacher had taken in decoying Hippolyta.

It was late in the afternoon and already dusk when the brougham drew up as near Mr. Regan's as it could be safely taken. Rupert, not venturing to give his card, whether as Mr. Glanville of Clarence Gardens, or Mr. Malcolm of Forrest House, merely said in answer to the servant who answered his knock, that he had urgent business with the

clergyman. She had admitted that he was at home, although Rupert, not knowing his name, or whether there were one or more, had made a random guess in simply asking for him under that general designation. When he spoke of urgent business, she left him standing in the dark passage and disappeared. Returning not long after, she showed him into the sitting-room, which was almost as dark; and there he waited, considering with himself how he should begin the cross-examination to which he intended to submit the unknown ecclesiastic. Mr. Regan came in, apologised for the want of light, turned on the gas, and made ready to listen. The artist judged it prudent to begin with Ivor Mardol's name.

'Excuse me,' said Mr. Regan at once, 'I trust you have not come about the business which brought Mr. Mardol here some days since. I am certainly not my brother's keeper in this instance; and if you want him, you must go to his chambers.'

Rupert looked at him. 'I do not know whether it is your brother's business or not,' he said curtly; 'it may be, if your brother, or yourself, for matter of that, be a member of a secret society.'

'I, my dear sir!' exclaimed the clergyman in accents of dismay; 'for what do you take me? As for Maurice, I give him up. I cannot deny, how much soever I may deplore, his connection with plotting and nefarious men.'

'I thought so,' said Rupert, his face darkening; 'and was it about your brother that the lady came who accompanied Mr. Mardol?' The murder was out, he said to himself. These were all meshes of a net in which, by whose fault it did not signify, Hippolyta had been entangled.

Mr. Regan examined his visitor's looks, and became more cautious.

'I know nothing of the lady except that she called herself Mrs. Malcolm. I told her what I have already repeated to you, that if she wished to hold communication with my brother, the only way was to call at his chambers.'

'Cannot you inform me of Mrs. Malcolm's business with your brother?' inquired Rupert, moderating his tone. 'I assure you it may be a matter of great, of vital importance.'

But the clergyman was not to be disarmed. He had a great regard for his brother, worthless though Maurice had proved himself. On many a previous occasion he had thrown the shield of silence over his delinquencies; and the stern, serious manner of the artist, who gave no name and seemed to have business of an unpleasant sort in hand, determined him to say as little as possible. Instead, therefore, of disclosing the errand on which Hippolyta had come, he answered deliberately:

'If you will let me know whom I have the pleasure of addressing, I may be better able to judge whether you would be interested in Mrs. Malcolm's business. But I must decline discussing it with a stranger.'

Except in Forrest House and among the acquaintance of his servants, who could not be expected not to talk of their master, Rupert had never assumed the style and title of Malcolm. What name should he give? Would this suspicious clergyman tell him anything he did not know, even when he had run the risk—for a risk it was in either case—of appearing as Malcolm or in his own name? It did not seem probable. Allowing, as was now evident, that the motive for Hippolyta's leaving home—he still called it home—was connected with the designs of revolutionists, he might be certain that they would guard their secret jealously. He must try another means.

These thoughts passed through his brain while he was putting on his glove. He had remained standing, and Mr. Regan had not come many steps inside the door. He now said:

'My name is of no consequence. I will only ask you to inform Mrs. Malcolm, if you should see her again, that her visit here is known by those who seek her, and that she will do well to communicate with them if she desires to prevent the most serious harm.'

He meant it for a threat of suicide, and Hippolyta, he thought, would so understand it. Mr. Regan answered, with much dignity, that he did not suppose the lady would call again. He was a frigidly-correct, not an inquisitive man; and although, a few moments after Rupert left the house, he heard the sound of wheels driving away, he would not so much as look through the window to ascertain what

species of conveyance it was that had brought his anonymous and unwelcome visitor. Rupert, on the other hand, when he had been driven the length of a street, bethought himself that it would be well to know the clergyman's name. He got out, therefore, and inquired at a little shop hard by who it was that lived at the address he mentioned, for he had learnt that from Thomson. The shopman, not without pomposity, answered, 'The Reverend Philip Regan.' A light flashed across Rupert's mind. 'Philip Regan?' he said, 'I remember now. By heaven, it is the very clergyman Hippolyta wanted to see,—how long ago? Before Christmas. Yes, it is months since she spoke of him; and I, dolt as I was, made a jest of it when she seemed to be telling me why she wished to call. But did she really mean me to know, or was it only a ruse? The thing must have been going on then, whatever it was. And she seemed so happy; the cloud had quite passed from her which I noticed at the beginning of our life together.'

He groaned aloud when he thought of it. Was she the guileless creature he had loved and worshipped, or full of design and treachery? Oh, it did not matter now, not now; let her only come back and his heart would be open to her as of old. How could he live without Hippolyta? The strong man leaned his head upon his hand, crying like a child, as the carriage rolled forward through the interminable London streets, the gas-lamps flaring on each side of it, and the noise of traffic and the roar of vehicles seeming to mock his grief with their soulless reverberations. Where was she now, when the night had drawn on, when every one that had home or shelter made towards it? She was in peril and far from the heart that loved her best in all the world; he knew no more, but alas, he could not be uncertain of that. She was surely miserable and a wanderer on the face of the earth. Perhaps she was alone; or, if not, in the power of villains who would make of her, generous, confiding, ardent as she was, the tool of their murderous ambition. Other women, carried away by the frenzy of revolution, had whetted the knife or sharpened the dagger. And Hippolyta, with her wild enthusiasm, might think to

emulate the Charlotte Cordays who had risen up throughout Europe in these anarchic times. When Rupert thought over it all, he cursed Edgar Valence and Ivor Mardol, to whose influence early or late he attributed the evil which had fastened on Hippolyta like a disease. But for Colonel Valence, the love which had innocently sprung up between them would ere now have been crowned with marriage, and Hippolyta be happy as the wife of one whose reputation, at any rate, was not altogether unmatched with her beauty and grace. Or, allowing the first false step, she might still have dwelt in seclusion, surrounded with every homage, her slightest wish anticipated, enjoying happiness and giving it in the way she had chosen. But no. What her father began, this false friend must accomplish. She had sacrificed the world to Rupert; she had now been prevailed upon to sacrifice him and all his hopes and joys to the Revolution. Glanville was cut to the heart. What should he do to-morrow, when no Hippolyta was near him? And would to-morrow be only the first of many days to be endured alone, without love, without friendship, all the light gone out of his life? Surely he must find her or make an end.

With these sad thoughts weighing on him, Rupert arrived, after his long journey through the lamp-lit streets and the straggling suburban lanes, at Forrest House. He sat alone at table and forced himself to eat, knowing how much was to be done, or attempted, on that morrow which he dreaded to see. It was like a meal at the side of the grave. His food choked him. There was no letter or message from any one. William Dauris had come round at nightfall and inquired whether Mrs. Malcolm were returned, or what news they had. 'Tell him there is none, as yet,' said Rupert wearily. He did not desire to see the man; he shrank from contact with any one that had known Hippolyta as from everything she had touched. But the latter feeling gave way to overpowering tenderness when, late at night, he entered her boudoir and sat down in her favourite place near the window. There the signs of her recent presence, the trinkets lying in a pretty feminine disorder, the scarf thrown carelessly down, were

so many arrows to wound him. How well he remembered their bright caressing love-talk during those long summer evenings, when they watched the stars rising like silent silver fires into the sky and shining down upon them peacefully! How beautiful she looked when, her eyes seeming to kindle under her golden hair, she spoke in tender accents of the charm that love had cast over them both, and of its glamour which was life, and truth, and the heart of existence! He had been delighted and amazed, during those hours of rapture, at her strange high poetry. Alas, alas, had she not been such a votaress of enthusiastic beliefs, had there been mingled in her some grains of vulgar commonplace, she would be now turning his solitude to heaven. But he rebuked the profane thought. Hippolyta might be impulsive, wild, demoniac in her headlong aspirations; vulgar or commonplace she never could be. It was her unlikeness to other women, her supremacy of spirit as of outward loveliness, that had brought him to her feet. And the deity was vanished, the shrine broken. He sat during the night alone with his sorrow, going over these things till the repetition racked his brain.

Alone, indeed, he was; singularly, fatally alone, now that he had broken with Ivor Mardol. If Hippolyta was gone the way he supposed,—and what other way could she have gone?—but one man in London could aid in her recovery, and that man's lips were sealed; or rather, he was the criminal and would be the last to confess his crime. Ivor was daring and resolute, he believed—like Robespierre, said Glanville to himself—in his own integrity, and behind him were the resources of a great association, pledged to second its agents in whatever they undertook, and hesitating at no turpitude. What was Rupert against such odds? He might instruct his lawyer, call in the police, offer rewards; and when he had done all this, the only result would be to publish Hippolyta's disgrace to the light of day and blast his own character. What he did, therefore, must be done warily; he could not take any one into his confidence. In the neighbourhood of Forrest House it would be incumbent on him to appear as Mr. Malcolm; but he dared not present himself under a

feigned name to the police authorities. Mardol and Hippolyta had doubtless weighed these things, and knew how difficult they made pursuit and discovery. The more he thought of them now, the less he was inclined to his first conjecture, that disaster had turned her brain, and her flight had taken place in an hour of madness. Nothing, it should seem rather, had been wanting to the deliberation of it. What cruel, cold words she had left behind, as her farewell to the man she loved? They stabbed him again and again with their icy point; he could bear almost anything else, but not to recall that line and a half. '"Brief,"' he said to himself with the curious aptitude we have for remembering well-known verses or sayings when our nerves are highly strung,—'"brief as a woman's love, or the poesy of a ring." Oh, true, Hamlet!' he cried.

CHAPTER XXX

INTER MORTUOS LIBER

BUT something must be done without delay. He would return to his house in Belgravia, to be nearer the scene of action, if action there should be. For it was not imaginable that Hippolyta would show herself in the vicinity of Forrest House, situate in an out-of-the-way, peaceable suburb, not known for its connection with aught more revolutionary than borough politics. Much more likely that she had left England and was travelling to Berlin, or St. Petersburg, or New York, to the centre of the storm-cloud that might be on the point of bursting on the head of Prince or President. What were the newspapers discussing? They sometimes held out storm-warnings of this kind also, and might for once be useful to him. Glanville did not believe in journalism, and seldom read a line in the daily prints. But now he went to his club, and sitting down in the library, which at that time of day was solitary as an African wilderness, turned over the files of the week's intelligence. Pah, how vapid it seemed! Did the nations put this stale vinegar to their lips every morning, and take it as sent down overnight from the suppers of the gods? What rinsings of Olympus! He turned the pages to and fro, travelled down the leading articles, sounded the solemn depths of the Foreign Correspondence. It left him uncertain. There were plots and rumours of plots, meetings of European workmen, strikes at Breslau, at St. Etienne, at Barnsley, on the railroads of New England, and among the cotton-spinners in Italy. Signs of a possible storm he read everywhere, but from what quarter would

the lightning flash out? An infernal machine of the latest invention had been discovered at the Winter Palace, in the Emperor's writing-desk, and several of his confidential aides-de-camp had been arrested on suspicion. The police had dissolved a socialistic gathering of Free Czechs at Prague; and the guard round the English Prime Minister was to be considerably strengthened in consequence of the last attempt to blow up his country seat. In yesterday's *Times* Glanville read with a beating heart that two women had been stopped by the Belgian police on their way from London to Brussels, and that compromising documents had been found in their possession which indicated the outbreak of another dynamite enterprise, though whether in Moscow or St. Petersburg it was not as yet possible to say. The description given tallied in neither case with Hippolyta, and the news was too recent; yet Glanville could hardly restrain himself from starting at once for Ostend. When, however, he reflected that his presence and the inquiries he must make would serve, in a foreign country, only to inculpate Hippolyta, if she were one of the women captured, and that more light would be thrown on the affair in the course of the next few days, he judged it prudent not to run after an uncertainty. One thing was clear, that Colonel Valence's daughter, if disposed to thrust herself into peril, might find the occasion wherever she happened to cast her eyes. The battle seemed to be raging along the whole line.

As he read on, not knowing what else to do, his attention was caught by one of the many advertisements which promise secrecy and success in the investigation of cases like Hippolyta's. He wondered that he had not thought of it before. But Glanville was a man who would hardly stoop to pluck a jewel out of the mire if there was a likelihood of soiling his fingers. The idea of a private police was repugnant to him, and was associated in his mind with every form of vice and degradation. Truly, it might be said of this artist-temperament that he was gentlemanly to his very finger-tips. Now, however, when he required a search to be made, and could not turn to the authorities of Scotland Yard, he clutched at the only means which

appeared feasible; and taking the man's name and address, went home and despatched thence a carefully worded letter, in which he begged him to come, immediately to Clarence Gardens on a matter of the utmost urgency. He might name his own terms, but there must be as little delay as possible. Glanville, after reflection, had resolved to prosecute the search in his own name.

It was well he did so, for Mr. Bernstein, when he appeared in the course of a couple of hours and was introduced into Rupert's study, began the conversation easily with an allusion to the artist's fame, and the pleasure it gave him to recognise the fidelity of the portrait which had created such a sensation in the Academy two years ago. Glanville, whose talent for self-mockery had been a good deal cultivated, said in reply, that to be famous was indeed a fine thing, and offered to paint Mr. Bernstein, if that gentleman would sit to him. The answer was a not unpleasant smile, which served as garnish to the aphorism, pronounced by the detective with a business-like air, that time was money. He preferred to sit on golden eggs rather than in the luxurious but expensive chair to which Glanville invited him. The artist, however, had been really struck with the capacities of Mr. Bernstein as a subject. As his name indicated, he was a German, or more accurately speaking, a Polish Jew. It is possible that in the sacred pages of the *Almanach de Gotha*—a volume never to be mentioned without reverence—there may be illustrious and even princely Bernsteins. But this was not one of them. Plebeian, not prince, was stamped on his yellow forehead, his starved and sallow countenance, and his drooping shoulders. He was of unusually small stature, though not a dwarf; and the meagreness of his general appearance denoted either scant opportunities of eating, or a severe control over the grosser appetites. But it was the pear-shaped head, with its flaming coal-black eyes, and long, curling, coal-black hair, that had drawn Glanville's admiration. The vitality in that dried-up organism must have been immense; it seemed to pour out at the eyes and to overspread the parchment-like features; it was suggested in the snaky curls which would doubtless,

if one touched them, give out electric sparks like the back of a tiger. The man, though no patrician, was full of intellect and energy; there could not have been a drop of Western blood in his veins, nor a fold of Teutonic dulness in his brain. Glanville beheld him with the same mingling of wonder, curiosity, and dislike which he had felt in reading the grimmest pages of the Old Testament. He was a leaf torn out of the Book of Judges.

When he had taken a seat where he could observe Glanville closely, and the artist was reflecting how he could give sufficient information for the purpose of recovering Hippolyta, yet keep himself in the background of his narrative, Mr. Bernstein, who, with his head slightly bent on the right side, appeared to be looking him through and through, lifted his yellow hand impressively, and with forefinger held up as if to bespeak earnest attention, began in a strong penetrating voice, where the German accent made itself harshly felt, 'Before you tell me the story which I see you are turning over in your mind, let me sketch the principles on which I conduct my office. They are simple. On your side you purchase, and no doubt you require absolute secrecy. You shall have it. But on my side, acting under your directions, I can require nothing except what you wish to grant. Are you interested in succeeding; greatly, deeply interested? If so, your account of the situation will be absolutely frank and complete. But if you are not, you will either keep something back, or overlook some little detail on which all the rest hangs. I have had large experience, and I have always seen, as your poet Shakespeare says, that "riddling confession finds but riddling shrift." Now, sir, we can proceed when you like, and I am at your service.' He unbent his warning attitude and leaned back in his chair.

Glanville, though in deep trouble of mind, could not refrain from smiling at the quotation, so quaintly borrowed for the purposes of private inquiry from *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as at the straightforward shrewdness of the old man, who spoke with official gravity. But the words came home. What should he disclose, what keep to himself? He took the way that promised the least difficulty.

'The facts,' he said to Mr. Bernstein, 'on which I should like you to exercise your skill are as simple as your principles. A lady——'

'Of course,' said Mr. Bernstein, taking out his pocket-book; 'what is her name?'

'Her name is Hippolyta Valence, but she has been known for the last nine months as Mrs. Malcolm. She has suddenly disappeared from home, and I am commissioned to discover and if possible bring her back.'

'Commissioned by Mr. Malcolm?' inquired the Jew, scrutinising his every feature.

Glanville was at a standstill.

'I see,' said the other, 'you do not know whether to tell me. Perhaps Mr. Malcolm is of no consequence; perhaps it all depends on who Mr. Malcolm is. Let me know the rest, and we will come back to this point.'

'No,' said Rupert, forcing the words through his teeth, 'it will not do. I am Mr. Malcolm.'

'Good,' was the answer, 'now the mountain is levelled, and we shall see our way. The lady has left you, and you wish her to return. Very well; can you say who is the gentleman? Have you any suspicions?'

'There is no gentleman,' returned the artist, blushing all over; 'that is what makes the case extraordinary.'

The Israelite shook his head in sign of doubt. 'Such a case would be extraordinary indeed,' he replied with a philosophic smile, and then shrugging his shoulders as he spoke; 'but it does not happen. You will find there is a gentleman. It may well be that you have never seen him, but that is nothing. Now tell me where Mrs. Malcolm lived, and what society was within her reach during those nine months.'

Rupert, omitting the scene in the studio, which he despaired of making credible to this hard-headed cynic, as he appeared to be, told all the rest faithfully so far as he knew it. There was so little, however, to tell. The Jew, as if he had been a Queen's Counsel examining a hostile witness, obliged him to discriminate between the facts about which there could be no doubt, and the inferences which Glanville was inclined to draw from them. But he did so

with a gentleness that encouraged and did not confuse the mind; he was astonishingly observant of the artist all through, and seemed to take down his notes with a flash of lightning. When the flight of Annie Dauris was mentioned, followed at three days' interval by that of Hippolyta, he lifted his pencil and said, 'Have you searched out the antecedents of that young woman? The case grows clearer. I daresay when we come upon the trace of Annie Dauris we shall discover the second gentleman not far off.'

Rupert again denied vehemently that Hippolyta's motives for quitting Forrest House were of the nature alleged. But it was true that he had not much information about Annie Dauris. However, it could be obtained from her people. And he went on to speak of Hippolyta's frequent visits to the East End, culminating in her appearance, after Annie's flight, at the door of his friend Ivor Mardol. This led him, under impressive silence on Mr. Bernstein's part, to introduce the subject of Nihilism. He had no sooner done so than the Jew rose from his chair, saying hurriedly, 'Why did you not begin at the beginning? There may be two leading motives here. Was Miss Valence a Nihilist before you made her acquaintance?'

'She has been educated in revolution,' replied Glanville; 'it is her own and her father's creed. Colonel Valence has taken a decided share in all the movements of the last thirty years against the social order.'

Mr. Bernstein, looking very grave, sat down again. 'Let me hear all you know about Colonel Valence,' he said, 'especially his *aliases*.'

'His what?' inquired Glanville, not catching the word.

'The names under which he has travelled. You do not suppose a conspirator has only one set of visiting-cards in his pocket,' returned the Jew placidly.

'I know nothing of all that,' replied Glanville.

'Miss Valence never talked to you of her father or of secret societies then?'

'Never in that way. I did not wish for confidences about them. It was the same with Ivor Mardol. If he had an *alias* I never learnt it.'

'No, that is evident,' said Mr. Bernstein; 'and Mrs.

Malcolm, you say, took no money with her when she left you?'

'Not a shilling, I believe; not even what was in her purse, which I picked up next morning on the floor by her writing-table.'

The affair looked darker than at first. When nearly two hours had been spent in Rupert's examination, and he had, or seemed to have, nothing to add, the Jew, running his eye down the pages of his pocket-book, said in a judicial tone, 'There are several alternatives, of which the least probable is that Colonel Valence, acting alone, has sent for his daughter. That will be seen into, but for the present may be omitted. The others reduce themselves to these: Miss Valence, acting in collusion with Annie Dauris, which we may take for granted, has put herself under the protection either of Maurice Regan or Ivor Mardol, whichever of them she has fallen in love with. Your mistake, my dear sir, lay in your supposing that a lady, brought up in the principles of the Revolution and among revolutionists, would or could remain faithful to a man who did not satisfy that side of her temperament. No doubt her inclination for yourself was very powerful, but it was not rooted in the deepest passion of all, to which it has now yielded. You may be right in supposing that she has been engaged, or will be later on, in carrying out the Nihilist designs; I should think it very likely. But it will always be under the orders of her lover. We have found the gentleman, you see. What makes it slightly embarrassing is that there are two of them.'

'I cannot believe it,' said Rupert, groaning aloud at the picture of Hippolyta's degradation conjured up before him. 'I had rather see her dead than so shamefully dishonoured. It is impossible.'

'Yes, yes,' replied the Jew; 'you naturally feel so. And yet these impossible things are mostly true. *À propos*,' he went on, in a tone of calm inquiry, 'there has been no search made in the dead-houses?'

'Where?' cried Rupert, shuddering from head to foot. 'You—you must not say such things to me, or I shall do you or myself a mischief.' The horrible suggestion com-

pleted his dismay. Hippolyta dead! Dead perhaps while he had been lingering at Forrest House and over the files of newspapers! He almost fainted at the thought. 'Why do you not go at once?' he cried to Mr. Bernstein, who sat waiting impassively till he should recover. 'Inquire everywhere. Put out a reward. Tell the police to have the canals, the Serpentine dragged.'

'Patience, patience, my dear sir,' replied the Jew in soothing accents; 'everything shall be done as it ought. Is it not a proverb with you, the more haste the worse speed? We cannot inform the police like that. If they meddle, they will do as they have always done, and throw out the child with the bath-water.'

'What do you mean?' said Glanville, his mind still confused with horror.

'I mean that the Nihilists, or Socialists, call them what you will, have friends among the police, or among their acquaintance, and therefore can know when they are coming. It is not my way to employ the police. And see you, sir,' he continued, with a ring of decision in his voice, 'I will show you my mind as if you were reading it on paper. I do not feel sure that we shall recover Mrs. Malcolm. If it was only an affair of the heart, I could promise something. For love is very indiscreet and given to talk; and he does not mind being found out, he is so proud of himself. But there is another passion here, nearly as strong, which desires concealment and knows many hiding-places all over Europe. More than that, I have not any business with secret societies. I am a stranger to politics and revolutions; and the province I have assigned myself is entirely confined to private life. If I was to put my hand into politics I should be putting it into the wolf's throat. One must not lie between the hammer and the anvil or it will go bad with one.'

'But you will take up this inquiry,' said Rupert, 'if I ask you, and pay whatever you demand. The politics are nothing to me—only bring back Miss Valence; it is all I want. For what I care, the Nihilists may blow up the Tower of London to-morrow.'

'That would not be my sentiment if I were an English

citizen like you,' returned the Israelite. 'But you do not understand my position. I have to live and move about in a subterranean region, which is full of mines and—how do you say?—countermines. Look, it is like a London street. Under the pavement which the carriages of the great people roll over, there are the water-pipes, and under them the gas is laid, and beneath that again is the main drainage, and deep down, in the bowels of the earth where all should be still as a mouse, there is the railway with the trains tearing along,—you say tearing?—and there are stations with their lights, and the boys selling journals, and people eating and drinking at buffets, and I know not what. Such is the world to which I also belong. The police do not like me, for I take the bread out of their mouths; the International does not like me, for it is impossible that I should not know of their doings one day or another; and so my people encounter great risks. I tell you, then, that if Mrs. Malcolm has thrown herself under the ægis of the revolution, I may hunt out where she is, but to bring her back I cannot give a pledge. Is it understood?'

When Mr. Bernstein spoke hastily, he fell into the German idioms to which his youth was accustomed, diluting them in a menstruum of French, as is the way with nearly all who have travelled much in their time.

Rupert answered with the utmost impatience, 'For God's sake, let me have tidings of her, and we will decide the rest then. Only lose no more time.'

He laid on the table a purse of sovereigns, which Mr. Bernstein said he preferred to a cheque as being safer; and, when arrangements for corresponding had been made on both sides, he saw the Jew off with a sense of alleviation, for the interview had tried him exceedingly. As soon as the door was shut on that venerable figure, he returned to his study, and, throwing himself on the sofa, fell into a troubled sleep. Mr. Bernstein, meanwhile, bearing an epistle from the artist, drove at his top-speed to Forrest House, to inspect, as he said, 'the basis of operations.' He had a strong belief that the localities tell half the story when they are examined by a careful eye

It was late in the evening when Rupert awoke, not so much refreshed as shaken and unnerved by the nightmare slumbers into which he had fallen. One dread predominated — the horrible fear evoked so calmly by Bernstein, that Hippolyta might have done herself a fatal injury or have met with foul play. To know that she was living, though degraded and estranged from him for ever, would have been consolation, in spite of what he had exclaimed a few hours ago. Hippolyta's death was an evil without a remedy; he would bear anything, however disgraceful, rather than that. Search the dead-houses, had Bernstein said? What were the dead-houses of London? Whither did they take the drowned, and the murdered, and the bodies of suicides in the great Babylon? There was no *Morgue* as at Paris. He began to think over what he had seen from time to time in the newspapers on this frightful subject. It seemed to him that he ought to go from one hospital to another, from one workhouse to another, and make inquiries that very night. But the Jew would do all that was necessary, and let him know if anything came of it. Rupert, with many a sigh, had given him the only portrait he possessed of Hippolyta. It was the one precious thing he carried with him wherever he went. You remember it, reader? The sketch made in happier days, soon after their engagement, which represented Hippolyta in her riding-habit, as Rupert beheld her for the first time when, in the Hermitage, she turned round from Ivor Mardol's book-shelves, and faced the intruder. Nothing could be more light or graceful. But Mr. Bernstein, who had not been shy at expressing his admiration for Rupert's portrayal of himself in the Academy, knew human nature too well to say a word on receiving this of Hippolyta. He was sharp of speech and independent; but that silence was golden naturally occurred to him on observing the look with which Glanville abandoned his treasure. Yes, the private-inquiry office would send what intelligence it might have; and the artist had implored Bernstein not to delay, be the hour day or night, in despatching his messenger to Clarence Gardens. But an unrest drove him forth, and once he was in the streets, he might as well, it

seemed to him, do that which lay nearest his heart and gain assurance, if possible, that Hippolyta was yet living.

For the second time, then, he found himself wandering about London alone, possessed with the thought of her, as on that night which had seen the commencement of their guilty happiness. Guilty, did he call it? Yes, he acknowledged his sin. He would not pretend that he was blameless, or had been coerced by a stronger will. He ought to have resisted. The doom might have fallen upon Hippolyta which had now overtaken them both; it was fear of it that had swayed him then; but he saw now with fatal clearness that what would have been at the worst his misfortune was become his unpardonable crime. The night, which was wild and stormy with chequered moonlight, reminded him of the flying clouds and cold brilliancy of that former scene, when he had spent hour after hour meditating on the temptation instead of resisting it. Again his thoughts reverted to the solitude of that night, the silent ghostly bridge, and the flood of waters hurrying between its arches to the sea. Was Hippolyta floating along the river now, or hidden in its depths amid the unutterable pollutions that had revealed themselves to his vision where he stood, gazing into it? He dared not go near it yet. He would inquire at a police station, at one or two of the workhouses which he supposed must be in the neighbourhood, whether the dead body of a woman had been found that day or the day before. It was late, and suspicions might be aroused; but he could not go home, and, while he was abroad, this spirit of unsatisfied longing drove him on.

He did inquire, at first with no result. There had been accidents within the last forty-eight, within the last sixty, hours of all kinds—drowning, burning, fatal collisions in crowded streets, children run over, the bodies of new-born babes found on the public highway,—casualties in the battle of life which is ever going forward under the cloud of civilisation that hides it and yet heightens its horror. But on the list of the dead was no woman such as Glanville, who dared not use too particular a description, inquired after. Was he sure, they asked, that it was a case of drowning? Other kinds of accidents were taken to the

hospitals,—indeed these were, too, when there seemed hope of restoring animation. Rupert said in a low voice, 'Thank you,' and went on his way. What was it he thanked them for? The little courtesies which soften and adorn our commonplace life have in them something hideous, grotesque, sardonic, when they are repeated amid the horrors of death. He turned to the first great hospital of which the name was ringing with monotonous iteration in his brain. He entered the hall, which at that hour, with the lights half-turned down, looked vast and solemn. There was some one keeping vigil, who rose when he appeared on the threshold and came towards him. In a whisper he asked whether any one had been brought there lately from the river or elsewhere, any accident,—a woman, young, fair-haired,—and he described Hippolyta. The night-porter could not say; he would make inquiry, and he went in search of a nurse. Soon they both came back, whispering. The nurse looked at Glanville, saw he was a person of distinction, and replied that such a young woman, but poor, in ragged garments, had been brought in early that morning, not from the river, but from a common lodging-house. She had poisoned herself in a fit of despair, of shame, it appeared. They had brought her round a little, but she could not live. They did not know her name or history. Would the gentleman see her? He followed the nurse at once, stepping noiselessly upstairs, and was shown into a great ward, full of beds, in almost every one of which lay a sleeping patient. On his right, near a window, he was bidden to look close and say whether he recognised the young woman that lay there staring at him with eyes wide open. She was not asleep, nor yet fully awake, but dazed and speechless. Oh no, it was not Hippolyta. How could they speak of that as fair hair? They had never seen the golden locks which had wounded his heart. The features were pretty but wasted; he knew what sort of woman it was; and while he said so to himself in a low whisper, the staring eyes seemed to gather consciousness and to look at him more fixedly. No, no, not Hippolyta. Again he thanked them and went out.

The clouds were drifting still, and the moon high. He

rambled aimlessly, falling into a slow walk, until, as he moved past some huge building, his memory tapped him on the shoulder, as if to say, 'Ask the question here; it is a workhouse which you pass when you are driving to the station for Trelingham.' He rang the night-bell, inquired, was told that others had been there already on a like errand, and that only the corpse of a boy, whom his mother had stabbed the day previously, lay in the mortuary awaiting an inquest. 'Bernstein, then,' he said to himself, 'is taking pains, as he promised. Why do I not go home?' But his limbs were possessed with the spirit he had called up. On he went, uncertain of the ways, now hither, now thither, sometimes inquiring when he found himself, he knew not how, at the door of a police-station, sometimes when his hand was on the bell turning as from a fruitless search and passing by. Still, the instinct that led him seemed to unlock these grim repositories; and he remembered years after the vision of the dead and drowned which in that long night was opened to him. He saw more than one woman, young or old, lying in her shroud prepared for burial, or in the clothes she had worn when casting herself into the river; and the wan features and startled eyes remained with him as a memory which he could never blot out. What a terror clung to the withered, gray tresses, stained with mud from the Thames, which he noticed, and that instant stereotyped on his brain, when casting a hurried glance into the dead-house,—at Kensington was it, or in what other place? He did not know, but he remembered the long gray tresses, which were not Hippolyta's, yet moved him to compassion as though there could be a likeness between them and her sunny curls. Enough, enough. He would not follow the spectre that held him so fast by the hand, but return to his miserable couch and wait. The morning brings good dreams, he said, and his eyes filled with womanish, helpless tears. If but in a dream he might see her for a moment, only once, only for so long as would let him fix again in memory the features whose outline was already growing dim. It was so little to ask. But his prayer was vain; and though he slept, not even in his dreams would the lady of his heart appear to him.

Ten days and nights passed in bootless wanderings through the immeasurable forest of London, in sighs and tears, and all the sad accompaniments of a downfallen love which seem so bitter to him that undergoes them, so trivial and unnecessary to others that only look on. It is strange how the bleeding of a man to death, which has happened sometimes on the ruin or loss of a beloved person, should tend to excite mockery; and yet it does. Glanville, with this arrow in his heart, would not have dared to face his friends; he hid away from the intimates who would have thronged round him had they known he was in town; and his feet strayed involuntarily towards the places where he thought Hippolyta might be concealed, in the dens of East London, which, as he had gathered from William Dauris, she had been visiting while he was at Trelingham.

On the tenth day Mr. Bernstein, who had sent him short messages of no very definite import during this time, appeared once more in his studio. He looked calm and collected—a contrast to Rupert, whose eyes were beginning to show that fatigued expression which follows upon anxiety continued over sleepless nights. The Jew, however, had not been idle. Warranted by the artist's letter to Mrs. Leeming, at Forrest House, he had searched into every corner of the old mansion, and, though discovering no clue to Hippolyta's disappearance, had been rewarded by finding Annie Dauris's letter, brought by the little boy on the morning of her flight, and locked up in one of Mrs. Malcolm's jewel-boxes. At the same time he had appropriated certain scraps of paper which enabled him to compare Hippolyta's former handwriting with that which she adopted in corresponding with Rupert. All that the gardener or his wife had to tell of their daughter, and of the lady's interest in her and attempts to bring the girl to a sense of her duties, he likewise knew, although he did not go near the cottage in Church Lane. He had even come upon the trace of Annie, who, it now appeared, had gone, as Hippolyta surmised, to Charlotte Fraser's, stayed with her a day and a night, and afterwards plunged into the obscure regions of London rascaldom,

either, as he supposed, in search of Maurice Regan, or to meet him by a preconcerted arrangement.

Rupert paid little attention to all this. What did it matter where Annie Dauris went? She was not Hippolyta. The details of private inquiry, however interesting to Mr. Bernstein, were to him ignoble and disgusting. But he woke from his lethargy when the Jew went on, in the same unimpassioned voice, to say, 'We have likewise examined Mr. Mardol's connection with this strange affair. When I heard the story from you last time I could not satisfy myself as to which of the two gentlemen, Mr. Mardol or Mr. Regan, was principal, and which was accessory—to use the terms of the law. I am now confident that Mr. Mardol has directed the game all through, while Mr. Regan may have held the cards. I do not say otherwise as to that,' he concluded.

'I was sure of it,' said Rupert in a low voice; 'but could I think that Ivor was a villain?'

'I did not say so,' replied the Jew; 'it is not for me to make a moral appreciation of his acts. But, first of all, did he not say that he was unacquainted with Mrs. Malcolm until he saw her in Denzil Lane?'

'Certainly,' answered Rupert; 'he gave me his word of honour that it was so.'

'Very well; and perhaps it was clever of him to persist in a system of complete denial, for he may have dreamt to himself that you could not reach the evidence. But one has found in his desk a number of papers, written in cypher indeed, to which we have not the key—that can wait—but in the known characters of Miss Hippolyta Valence. I will show you one morsel. See'—and he laid on the table a long thin strip of foreign note-paper covered with writing, which Rupert instantly recognised as Hippolyta's. He covered his face with his hands. She was lost to him for ever. Good heavens! how had he been deceived?

'Much,' said the Jew continuing, 'would depend on the date of this correspondence; but some of the envelopes found with it retain their postmarks, which are of two and even three years back. It is to be concluded, then, that

your friend was not speaking the truth when he denied to know Miss Valence. And as the girl Annie Dauris will account for the intrusion of Regan, we may assume in our future investigations that Mr. Mardol is the person to watch and convict.'

'But what has he done with Hippolyta?' exclaimed Rupert; 'you should have watched him already.'

'We have done that, to be sure,' said Bernstein; 'he does not leave home, however, except to go among the working men whom he is in the habit of visiting, and they appear to know nothing. Neither does he send letters by post. There was one he posted two days since. It was to you. Did you receive it?'

Rupert was fairly startled on hearing this slight but extraordinary proof of the completeness with which Mr. Bernstein conducted his investigations. He opened a drawer behind him and took out the letter. The Jew's eyes glittered for a moment like those of a gamester sweeping the stakes into his pocket.

'You have not answered it yet,' said he, looking attentively at the artist; 'what will you say to your friend?'

'Don't call him my friend, or you will drive me mad,' cried Rupert. 'No, I have not answered, though how you know that is a mystery. Are you also acquainted with the contents of this letter?' holding it out as he spoke.

Bernstein quietly waved it back with a motion of his hand. 'I have seen them,' he said; 'Mr. Mardol repeats the asseveration that he is innocent of Miss Valence's disappearance, and offers to help you in whatever steps you may undertake for her recovery. Not true? Is that not it?'

'Yes,' answered Rupert, more astonished than he chose to say. The Jew waited for him to continue, but as he seemed lost in thought, Mr. Bernstein himself resumed the thread of the conversation.

'If I might offer you an advice,' he said, 'I would accept Mr. Mardol's proposition.'

'What!' exclaimed the artist; 'take his hand again, after all these things; after breaking with him as I have done? Never! Our friendship is at an end. He has murdered it.'

'Ta, ta, ta,' said the Jew contemptuously; 'that is the

reason itself of my counsel to you. The proverb says, "To a rogue, a rogue and a half." Mr. Mardol is a false friend, you say. Good—then you must be more false friend.'

'I could not do that,' said Rupert slowly. Mr. Bernstein got up and came to within a foot of where he was seated. The artist in surprise eyed him, not without curiosity.

'My dear sir,' began the private detective in his hortatory voice, 'Mr. Mardol is, you say, a villain, a *taugenichts*, or what worse; but when he wrote to you he was doing you one service and me another. We will succeed by his means. But, Mr. Glanville,' he went on sternly, 'how will we succeed if you do not keep your share of the bargain?'

'What do you mean?' said Rupert, rising in his astonishment.

'I mean,' said the Jew, 'that it was understood between us that I should conduct this search, not you. And you are crossing our path at every turn, and asking imprudent and unnecessary questions, and raising the dust of suspicion where it is not easy to bring water and lay it. Why should you go to the dead-houses and the hospitals? If there was anything I would have informed you. But it is like two packs of hounds running down the same hare. They do only run into one another, and the hare escapes to her form. So is it with hunting in these fields. With one word, it cannot go on.'

Rupert felt the justice of his remarks and endeavoured to apologise. But it was a bitter draught, explaining the restlessness of a great sorrow to this vulgar Jew. 'Oh, Hippolyta,' he thought to himself, 'how are we fallen! Must you be dragged in the mire, and our love be desecrated like this?' Mr. Bernstein was not unacquainted with the outward fashion of intense grief. He listened to the apology and seemed satisfied.

'There are attenuating circumstances, I know,' he said; 'it is not my purpose to forsake this investigation, which promises to be curious. But now Mr. Ivor Mardol comes to our aid. You desire something to watch. Watch him. For, I must tell you,' he went on as if to anticipate Rupert's objections, 'you did not right, eleven days since, when you

threw away the opportunity of seeing all he would do. It was the very time when you should have clung to him like a leech. Ah yes, like a leech. But there is no loss, because he has laid his plans cunningly; and in what place Mrs. Malcolm may be, she will stay there until the storm has blown over. It was done at a stroke, cleverly, when you could not be there. Accordingly, it is now required to lay by hurry and passion, to persuade Mr. Mardol that you take him at his word, and to constitute yourself his gaoler, which you may do, if you please, from henceforth. And you will do it, if you are truly attached to Miss Valence. On the other foot, you will lose her once for all.'

The last words told. It was quite true. Granting that Ivor Mardol was the agent who had put all this machinery in motion, there could be no method of gaining control over it so effectual as to be ever by his side on terms of close friendship. Treachery was it? But who had been traitor first? And if, as he pretended, Ivor was innocent, there could be no harm in accepting a proposal he had made himself. When the letter came containing his attempted exculpation, Rupert had been minded to fling it in the fire without opening it. He was now glad he had restrained his passion. There were signs of relenting in his attitude as he sat down once more and motioned Bernstein to his seat.

'What do you advise?' he asked, without looking up.

'I shall advise,' answered Bernstein, 'something which is full of hazard, especially for a celebrated man like yourself. If you wish to pry into all Mr. Mardol's doings, you must become a member of his world—in other words, a Nihilist.'

'I become a Nihilist!' cried Rupert, with a mocking laugh. 'The suggestion is piquant. Why don't you bid me sell myself to the devil, eh Mephistopheles?'

'Because I am not Mephistopheles,' replied the Jew, as calmly as before, 'and because it would not advance matters, unless that potentate could tell us where Miss Valence is now. Come, Mr. Glanville, think it over, and you will confess it is the only way. I can watch Mr. Mardol so long as he keeps on this side of the curtain; but when he goes through it into the secret chambers of his fellow-revolutionists I cannot, or at any rate I do not

desire to follow him. I have told you it is not my department. But you, who do not care if the anarchists blow up the Tower of London to-morrow, need not be scrupulous in joining them. You can then keep an eye on Mr. Mardol during every one of the twenty-four hours. He did not foreshadow this move when he wrote to you his letter. It will give him the checkmate. He will be in your hands like a child or a teetotum, to spin round.'

All this appeared plausible enough; and to a desperate man, whose prospect in life without Hippolyta seemed like a long unbroken winter, the reasons which Bernstein urged with force and conviction might well prove decisive. They did so, in fact, although not until the Jew had presented them in the strongest light, adding that in the alternative of Glanville's refusing, he would throw up the game and sweep the pieces from the board. 'When you have become one of the society,' he continued, 'the match will be in your favour. I suppose Mrs. Malcolm cherished a real affection for you. In that case she may be persuaded to return, since in you she will find the realisation of her ideal, who should undoubtedly be a hero of the new order. Besides that, you will acquire friends whose co-operation may be indispensable, but of whom the very existence is not as yet known to you. Acknowledge Mr. Mardol's letter, appoint him a meeting here, and tell him frankly that you believe his defence, and only wish now to discover Colonel Valence. For that purpose you entreat him to make you an entrance into the society. He will at first refuse on the score of principle. But, tell me, you have never posed as a friend of absolute power? You are known as a free-thinker, and have nothing to unsay? If I had not ascertained that such was your reputation I would not have presented myself with this proposition in my hand.'

Rupert could not help admiring the combination of frankness and guile in Bernstein's proposal. To make an anarchist of a free-thinking artist was by no means difficult; and were example sufficient to justify that course it might be had for the asking. More than one well-known poet and painter had been enrolled in the Nihilist ranks. Nay, was it not the consummate *littérateur*, Turgenieff, who had

invented the name? But it might be too late. Would not Ivor suspect this instantaneous conversion?

'No,' answered the Jew, 'not if you are as unreserved as I advise you to be. Make the prime motive your desire to meet Colonel Valence. The rest, considering your previous history and opinions, will seem perfectly reasonable. I should tell you that, while we know Mr. Maurice Regan left England last Friday on his way to Brussels, we cannot discover Colonel Valence or any one that has heard his name out of the neighbourhood of Falside, where inquiries were instituted immediately.

'And the women arrested at Brussels?' asked Rupert, 'is anything further known of them? In the English newspapers it is only said that they have undergone a fresh examination.'

'Here are their photographs, with the accompanying description by the Belgian police,' replied Bernstein, taking a packet out of the valise he had brought with him into the room. 'I do not think either of them can be Miss Hippolyta Valence.'

Neither did the artist, when he had seen the portraits and studied the accounts sent with them. One of the faces was too old, the other too young; and it was impossible that Hippolyta, however skilful in disguising herself, should have altered the very contour of her features. What was known of the women's antecedents, though needing confirmation, made the non-identity yet more certain. He gave back the parcel to the Jew, promised he would send for Ivor that afternoon, and arranged the plan upon which, in the alternatives of success or failure, they were to proceed.

When Bernstein was gone Rupert hastily scribbled the words, 'Come and see me at once,' and sent them by a messenger to Grafton Place. In a short time the sound of wheels was heard at the door, and Glanville, watching from the dining-room window, saw Ivor Mardol alight and run up the steps. Determined to act his part thoroughly now he had taken it up, Rupert came out into the hall, shook Ivor by the hand—a pressure which his old friend warmly returned—and led him into the study, where Bern-

stein's chair, standing in the middle of the room, testified that a visitor had not long departed. The sudden change in Rupert's behaviour, which he had been far from expecting—or was it anything else?—occasioned such uncontrollable emotion in Ivor that for some minutes he was unable to speak.

I have said that Rupert had almost in excess the artistic quality which seizes upon the present with a passion and firmness of grasp, which are utterly beyond the reach of those in whom reason and memory are stronger than imagination. It is the endowment which makes a consummate actor. And another gift he had which does not so often accompany it, due rather to the melancholy underlying his everyday character,—I mean that of keeping a secret from friends who, in other respects, were admitted to the fullest confidence. He could be frank enough to win implicit trust for what he said, while he was giving in return only so much as he deemed expedient. These were dangerous powers, and he knew it; but the time seemed to have arrived when he must stake or lose all, and he resolved to play the game boldly. It roused an excitement within him which, like one fever driving out another, made his grief for Hippolyta, though not less real, in some degree less poignant. Towards Ivor Mardol, who had lied to him deliberately, who had for years been carrying on relations with Colonel Valence's daughter which must have continued during her stay at Forrest House, Rupert's feeling was that of the Red Indian who treads noiselessly in every footstep his intended victim has made, always seeing his murdered man —to quote Keats's fine expression—a little ahead of him, and following with uplifted tomahawk until the moment is come to strike him dead. Treachery for treachery! Be it so. What other way was there of recovering Hippolyta or avenging her loss?

With the caressing eloquence, therefore, which he knew so well how to practise, Rupert, waving aside his old friend's attempt at exculpation as needless, and excusing the harsh words that had sundered them during these days on the ground of sudden, irresponsible passion, went straight to the point he intended. He might count on Ivor's devotion,

might he not? On his help in the calamity which had befallen him? Yes, he knew it. That was the reason he had sent for him. Rupert confessed, in terms of affection and self-rebuke, that he had been punished for keeping a secret from his dearest friend. That secret was the love which had sprung up, how, where, and when it mattered not, between himself and Hippolyta Valence. He watched for a change in Ivor's countenance, but no, the dissembling was perfect. Well and good. Hippolyta, who had had her own motives for living under the name of Mrs. Malcolm, had disappeared and could no longer be found. She had not returned to Falside; in London, what hope was there of coming upon her traces? The speaker's voice faltered as he went on to declare that he did not believe she was dead, or had met with a violent end. In the first outbreak of distress and fear he had charged Ivor with abducting her. It was, of course, absurd. He would not dwell upon the painful exhibition he had made of himself that morning. But, surely, some one had induced her to quit the house in which she had been residing and, without a moment's notice, to abandon those to whom she was dearer than life. Who could it be? After long meditation he had arrived at the belief that it was her father, Colonel Valence. What did Ivor think?

Ivor, who sat listening with his eyes fixed on Rupert, had not asked, and did not ask now, under what circumstances a young lady like Miss Valence was living away from home. It would have been an unpleasant query, though put by a friend. Rupert supposed that he was aware and did not require telling. Nor was he surprised when Ivor, instead of assenting to his theory about Colonel Valence, replied simply that he knew not what to think. He was evidently unwilling that Rupert should tear down the shelter afforded him by Hippolyta's father,—a thing which might speedily have happened were the Colonel sought after and proved innocent. Rupert returned to the charge; and Ivor, after making protestation that he did not wish to think evil of a man he had never seen (Rupert almost ground his teeth on hearing him repeat the falsehood), at last yielded and said, 'Suppose it were he, then?'

'Then,' cried Rupert, feigning more passion than he felt, 'I must discover him wherever he is,' and he straightway proceeded with the second half of the scheme. When he spoke of joining the anarchists his friend smiled; but, as he went on to assert with growing vehemence that he should certainly do it, cost what it might, Ivor turned pale. Did he see his plans checkmated? But he merely said, 'If you had resolved on it, Rupert, why did you not join our society before telling me?' I need not have known; whereas, hereafter, you will be putting me in a dilemma where I must either denounce my friend or break my pledged word to my associates. Are you not aware that it is incompatible with the existence of a secret society to allow men like yourself to enter it, or not to denounce them if by any means they have got in?'

'Men like myself!' repeated his friend. 'Ah, to be sure, you mean traitors and disbelievers in the principles of revolution. But I shall be no traitor. I am as ready as yourself to subscribe and to propagate the creed you maintain.'

'Readier, perhaps,' said Ivor, with a melancholy smile; 'but that will hardly save you, should your motives for joining us be revealed, as they might be.' He spoke with much deliberation.

Rupert looked at him. Was it a veiled threat? 'Yes,' he said to himself, 'I dare be sworn they would be revealed when it suited this fellow's convenience; but that is part of the risk.' And then aloud, 'No, Ivor; they would be quite safe so long as you were the sole confident of them, which is what I have in view. I want you, in short, to introduce me—to be my sponsor and the guarantee for my orthodoxy.'

'Me, my dear fellow,' exclaimed Ivor with agitation in his bearing and accent. 'Could there be anything more unfortunate? It is impossible. In the first place, knowing your motives, I should be acting a disloyal part to the association; and, in the second, I am myself under a cloud and what you may call excommunicate from the brethren.'

Glanville heard him with increasing hatred and admiration. He was an abominable liar and scoundrel, but how

ready, how fertile in device! It had not cost him a moment to strike out a double line of fortification between himself and the enemy. But it should not avail him. The artist affected not to take his words seriously.

'Bah, my dear Ivor,' he said, 'do you mean to tell me there is a single lodge in Great Britain that you could not enter this evening, and bring a friend in your train, if you chose?'

Ivor seemed to feel embarrassed. 'No,' he replied, though with evident reluctance; 'I do not say that. The matter is not one I can explain to a stranger, since all are strangers,' he added, as if to preclude offence, 'who have not taken our engagements. But I may tell you that I have been deprived of the offices I held, and am looked on by the most influential leaders with extreme distrust and dislike. I have attended no meeting for months. I do not know when I shall.'

'Here is an opportunity,' returned Glanville, who did not believe a syllable of what Ivor had just trumped up, as he scornfully whispered to himself. 'You could not have a better. You are a strayed sheep returning to the fold of your own accord, and bringing another to prove your sincerity. It is the very thing.'

Mardol shook his head. 'No, it is not,' he said. 'I mind my own risk as lightly as any man. But I will not encourage my friend to thrust himself, unarmed, into the lion's den. Do be persuaded, Rupert. Leave it to me to find Colonel Valence and his daughter, since you are sure they belong to us. I will make search in all directions.'

'Leave it to him, ay, that is what he would like,' was the mental commentary with which Glanville heard these words. He must strike the decisive blow. He stood up, walked across the study, and put his hand on Ivor's shoulder. Ivor turned his head towards the face which was bent down over him.

'Look here, Mardol,' said Rupert in clear metallic tones. It was so seldom that he called his friend anything but Ivor, that the young man put his hand to his heart with a sudden pang on hearing the colder designation. Rupert, who knew

how sensitive his affection was, or had been, noticed the gesture with satisfaction. Was he still capable of being wounded? So much the better.

Glanville, hardly pausing, continued what he had intended to say. 'Things between you and me'—such were his words—'have come to a pass where friendship must show itself heroic or must cease altogether to exist. There is no method by which I can hope to recover Miss Valence, or even to learn whether she still breathes, but this of entering your association. You, and you alone, can open the door to me. Do so, and you shall have your fitting reward, if you require any beyond that of helping a friend. Refuse, and we part, not now in passion as we did ten days ago, but with our eyes open, and for ever.'

He went back to his chair and sat down. Ivor's paleness became ghastly and his breath was like that of a man labouring under the greatest agitation. At last he said, 'Rupert, it is a hard battle. Will you give me your solemn promise not to betray the secrets, whether political or non-political, of the society?'

'With pleasure,' answered Glanville, who perceived that he was relenting. 'I will keep all the ordinances with the same fidelity which you would exact from the meanest member.'

'There are no mean members,' said Ivor; 'we are all equal once we have taken the oath.'

'Very well; then count me as your equal in this respect. I want to see Colonel Valence, and I am prepared to pay the price. Can I say fairer? Come, decide.'

'It shall be as you wish,' said Ivor, his voice sinking. 'What would life be without your friendship?'

'What, indeed?' returned the artist in the bantering tone with which he was accustomed to receive Ivor Mardol's idolatries when they were at school together. The light mockery seemed to exhilarate the heart to which it was addressed. Ivor, too, rose from his seat, and stretching out his arms and shaking himself, as though to get quit of a burden, he said in a lighter tone to Rupert, 'And to which party among us do you suppose Colonel Valence to belong? Is he a Spartan or an Athenian?'

'I am sure I cannot tell,' said Rupert; 'explain your meaning, my philosopher.'

'Not now,' answered his friend; 'this conversation has fatigued me horribly. By and by. I will take you first, however, to see the Athenians. Hold yourself free from engagements till you hear from me.'

CHAPTER XXXI

ANARCHY IN PURPLE

RUPERT sent a faithful account of the conversation between himself and Ivor that same night to Mr. Bernstein. It was like acting the spy and the traitor, but he said, while engaged upon it, 'The curtain has drawn up, I have come before the footlights, and, so long as the play lasts, I must be true to the character I have assumed, not to Rupert Glanville, who lies in a magic sleep.' He could not unravel the threads of Mardol's discourse when reflecting on it, nor had he dreamt that so calm and metaphysical a mind could thus develop the gifts of an arch-intriguer. When would the imposture burst? And how long should he be compelled to wait until the re-appearance of Hippolyta? However, he gave up rambling through the ways of the metropolis, dizzied himself with occupation, and, as in the days when he was longing for the one who had now abandoned him, rode from morn till dusk, and came in half-dead with fatigue.

It was an inexpressible relief to him when Ivor ran hastily in on a mild and spring-like evening, soon after he had taken off his riding-things—for he had only just come in from a long expedition out of town—and said to him, 'You are to meet the Athenians this evening; how long will it take you to get ready?'

'Must I dress?' inquired Rupert; 'what do the Athenians wear—a chlamys or a chiton? I haven't got either in the house; we shall have to adjourn to my studio.'

'I am sorry to say there is no need,' returned Ivor; 'they wear the ordinary evening-dress of European gentle-

men. But the distance is considerable. Do you know the Duke of Adullam's house at ——?' He mentioned an outskirt of London. On hearing the Duke's name Rupert turned round and laughed.

'Are you acquainted with him?' inquired the artist. 'I thought you never entered the society of Dukes.'

'I have entered his,' was the reply, 'and must do so again. He invites you to dinner; but I may as well warn you that after dinner, when the uninitiated have taken their leave, we shall hold open lodge for your benefit. I am keeping my ill-given promise to introduce you as a candidate. The rest you will look to yourself. A wrong answer, a slightly too conservative opinion, may ruin you.'

'Then you must coach me before we start,' said Rupert. 'I am quick at catching the sense, or nonsense, of a brief. Tell me what is expected, and I will mouth faithfully what madness would gambol from,—how do the verses run?'

'Be serious,' his friend said. He was afraid of these high spirits, which prompted Rupert sometimes to dangerous frivolity. 'What is expected of you is to show that you understand and sympathise with the Revolution. If you have the principles sound within you, the words will come of themselves. But let me tell you that you will meet men of quick discernment.'

'And is the Duke a Socialist?' laughed Rupert, going off to dress.

'You shall know when you have passed your examination,' said Ivor.

Rupert quickly finished his transformation, and when he came down, the two apparently devoted friends, in whose hearts such different feelings were ascendant, drove at a rapid pace along the western road, and found themselves, towards eight o'clock, traversing the country lanes under the dim radiance of the stars. Glanville, though like the rest of civilised men he knew by repute the house to which they were going, had never seen the outside of the park in which it stood; nor had he met the Duke of Adullam.

This Scriptural name, which conceals an illustrious and very ancient title, had been given to the Duke by his intimate friends, as well as by his inveterate enemies, for

much the same reasons which made it a political weapon of offence on a memorable occasion. Before his father's decease the Duke had figured in the House of Commons as a leader of opposition, whose reckless and daring eloquence, combined with a personal charm which few could resist, had threatened to sweep away a Ministry and to break up a party. That the party happened to be his own, and the Ministry that of their opponents, seemed not to trouble him at all, and added a bizarre interest to the man whose pleasure evidently lay in making mischief and leaving others to pay for it.

But at the opportune moment, when both sides of the House were trembling with dismay, a god appeared out of the machine and the country was saved. It was no other than Hermes, who conducts the shades to Charon's ferry. The Duke, the old Duke, our present Duke's father, was struck with apoplexy, whether on seeing his son's disregard of the sacred obligations of party, or in the natural course, was not apparent. But he did the one thing asked of him—he died,—and his son was rapt in a golden cloud to the House of Lords. The party was not dissolved, and the Ministry did not resign. These latter gentlemen, in the fulness of their hearts, would have offered the dead Duke a public vote of thanks and his remains a resting-place in Westminster Abbey, could they have discovered any other service he had done the nation save that of dying at the right conjuncture. As it was, they found some relief to their joyous feelings in condoling with the House of Commons on the loss it had sustained by the Marquis of ——'s translation to another place. The new Duke was not vindictive, but he felt the wound. Henceforth, although he did not openly proclaim war against the social order, he patronised all those that did. In becoming a Duke he felt that he had ceased to be a leader of men.

He set about showing his resentment, however, in a way of his own. The late member of the House of Commons and leader of a democratic section therein, became at one stroke its severest critic and, as the unthinking public supposed, a High Tory. He had some-

times affected the magnificent style of Edmund Burke,—he was clever at adopting any style for the nonce,—and had termed the Commons' House the august depositary of the rights and liberties of Englishmen. He now turned completely round. In many a winged speech, barbed with truth and polished like the edge of a razor, he showed that if Parliament was the acme of respectabilities, it was, for that very reason, a bundle of vested interests bound round the axe of the tax-gatherer, as the rods were tied about the Roman lictor's. His picturesque words and bold delivery drew cheers and laughter from the crowd, whom he was careful not to identify with a vulgar House of Commons. His epigrams, witty as they were cynical, made a stir in the languid air of society, and were relished by those who despised not only the degenerate Parliament of England, but all Parliaments and all peoples. His reputation rose higher than ever, and prophets were not wanting who spoke of the coming Tory Prime Minister as one that would bring back the days of Pitt and Chatham. They were in the wrong. After making a brilliant *début* in the House of Lords,—which, however, though he charmed never so wisely, could not be persuaded to sit over the dinner-hour,—and when he might have spent his days in receiving informal deputations from all the interests at which he gibed, the Duke suddenly abandoned politics, and was seen no more on platforms. He had found, or was endeavouring, like Tiberius, to invent, a new excitement. When he was tired of attacking respectability he outraged it. Hitherto a man of average, if not of irreproachable conduct, he shocked every one by publicly professing, in modern London, the principles of the Regent Orléans. That he chose to practise them was, in comparison with this parade of belief in them, venial and trifling. Society has never thought it right to interfere with a man's private pleasures, least of all with those of a great Duke. But it does insist, on this side of the English Channel, that vice shall pay due homage to virtue, whether in the shape of hypocrisy, or in that of reserve and a decent reticence. The Duke was not married; and it would have contributed to the happiness of others in his own rank with whom he was on

intimate terms, had they not been married either. It had been said, with some truth, that no woman could resist him. They did not always make the attempt. He was perfectly unscrupulous, foolhardy, and unblushing. His reputation among decent people was that of a man who had shamed his pedigree, his order, his relations, his acquaintance. He would have sought admittance in vain at doors which would be gladly thrown open, *à deux battants*, as the French say, to visitors that brought with them only the shadow of his strawberry leaves. But he did not seek admittance at such. He went into circles which gave him an affectionate welcome, and he sounded the almost unfathomable depths of refined and cultured vice. He was still in the prime of manhood. At twenty-five he had achieved fame in the House of Commons; he was not seven and twenty when a malignant fate decreed that he should sink into inglorious ease among the peers of the realm. And he was now enjoying an evil reputation of some ten years' standing. All this was matter of extreme notoriety; it might be known to the dogs in the street, and it could not escape the ears of Glanville, who, though not mixing in the society haunted by the Duke, had often heard his character discussed, and was aware that he sheltered under his roof every kind of doubtful person, foreign and domestic, making himself still a leader in those private coteries which influence the rise and fall of Governments, the success of opera-singers, and the fortunes of a play. It was from the universal access which distressed persons had to the Duke, especially if their character was at a discount, or the police took an interest in them, that he had acquired the title of Adullam, and his villa, to which Rupert and Ivor were now drawing near, that of the 'Cave.'

In spite of the disenchantment which Glanville had experienced during the last few days in regard to Ivor, he could not refrain from feeling, and expressing, his surprise that so austere a personage should endure the acquaintance of the Duke of Adullam. Ivor answered very little. He warned Rupert that until his initiation should be complete, and his loyalty to the brethren tested, there were matters

of consequence which he must take as he found them, for no explanation would be forthcoming. If he dreamt of purchasing secrets to-morrow by taking an oath this evening, he would be grievously disappointed. The artist bit his lips and kept silent. Evidently there was a struggle impending in the future that would call out all his energies. He must be wary and not impulsive, or his defeat was certain.

Buried in these reflections, which did not tend to raise his spirits, Glanville hardly noticed that they were passing through the gates of a lodge and entering a long avenue which was formed by great trees, the outline of whose stems and foliage, dimly visible under the stars, was no less grand than sombre. It might be some half-mile to the house; and, as they approached it, they saw the front door open, several other carriages standing before it as if just drawn up, and the windows right and left blazing with lights. They got out, and, passing up the wide steps to a terrace bordered with flowers, which were all dark and asleep in the night-time, entered a splendid hall hung round with paintings. Ivor, the shy and philosophic Ivor, appeared to be at home in the midst of these grandeurs; the servants likewise seemed to know him well, and for the first time in his life Rupert felt that he was under the protection of a man from whom, however great his affection might have been for him, he had never anticipated that particular kind of service.

They were shown into a smaller room, fitted up as a *salon* in the style of Louis XV., where they found the Duke awaiting his guests. It was, Ivor said in the carriage, to be a bachelors' party. Rupert was introduced by his engraver friend, whom the Duke lightly rallied for having deserted the Cave so many months together. Ivor Mardol replied that business had taken him abroad for one thing, and that principle had kept him at home for another. His Grace of Adullam smiled. He was a singularly prepossessing man, though not exactly handsome. But Rupert liked a human being to show some individual traits of character, even at the cost of a little beauty, and not to be eternally reminding one of that sad, unsatisfying Antinous.

The Duke's figure was well proportioned and he seemed neither tall nor short, though he stood six feet in actual measurement. His motions were graceful as a panther's, his voice lingered in the memory; and the large dark eyes, flaming like a basilisk's, told, no less than the melancholy passionate mouth, of a spirit that suffered the reverse of the pain of Tantalus,—not the longing before satiety, but the despair which comes after it. Ivor, when the Duke moved away, turned to his friend and said, 'What do you think of him? I have invented a Shakespearian compound name for the kind; I call it "restless-drooping."' The artist assented, but thought he should like to hear more of the voice that corresponded to the countenance and figure.

He was not to be baulked. When the number of guests was full they went rather silently into the dining-room, which was long and narrow, not unlike the picture-gallery at Trelingham, fitted up with a panelling of dark polished wood against which shone marble statues of exquisite loveliness. The lights were low and soft, except where they threw a blaze from above on the dinner-table; and somewhere in the distance might be heard the sound of running water, a subdued ripple which seemed unconsciously to tone the conversation that ensued and fill up its pauses. Rupert was charmed and, he could not but allow, surprised. Not that he had imagined he was invited to a noisy rout; the Duke was well known for his extreme refinement, and had never mixed with the rabble which stands on the outskirts of the highest society as on those of the lowest. But he had looked for something different. Were the guests around him anarchists? He examined them one by one. There were sixteen at table counting the Duke, who, as Rupert was again astonished to observe, had seated Ivor in the place of distinction at his right hand, where he talked to him earnestly. The young man took his honours with unruffled mien and seemed entirely at his ease. There was now no shade of anxiety on his brow. Again Glanville marvelled that he should be so thorough an adept in dissimulation. Ivor, he said to himself, knew that he had taken Hippolyta from his friend, and that his friend knew it. And he was sitting

with that friend at the same table as completely unmoved, as entirely master of himself, as though his loyalty had been unimpeached and unimpeachable. What a vile masquerade was life and friendship!

His thoughts reverted to the others. Were they indeed patrons or partisans of anarchy? The table at which they were met was a Duke's; the wines, the viands, the flowers that bloomed around them, were each in their kind rare and exquisite. Life in these climates had nothing more perfect to show on its material side; the senses were gratified to their highest, and every crumpled rose-leaf that could trouble their enjoyment was swept away. He noted the conversation. It was clever and ingenious, but at times something too searched-out,—he found himself saying with Holofernes, 'too peregrinate,'—to bear the stamp of unpremeditated gaiety. Nor was it exactly gay. It was high-pitched and then languorous, abounding in prose which apparently exhausted the resources of impassioned verse, yet could not express its meaning to the speaker's satisfaction. Some of the guests were gentle almost to effeminacy, and their out-of-the-way learning contrasted singularly with the mincing, tender tones in which they gave utterance to it. Two or three past the first years of old age were, on the other hand, grave, sententious, and majestic. Wearing the Florentine *lucco* instead of the black dress-coat and waistcoat, they might have come straight from the *Purgatorio* of Dante, with their earnest gestures and slow sonorous voices. These were not all English, like the young, wild-haired—and perhaps, in spite of their seriousness, hare-brained—dilettanti whom Rupert recognised as of the class which is perpetually discoursing of poems and pictures, though incapable of creating either. What struck him in all the talk was its chaotic nature. Not only did every man appear to have different patterns of heaven, earth, and hell from those which his neighbour carried, but the number of discordant patterns in each sample-book was without end. These strange guests, who did not mention or call each other by their names, had read everything, seen everything, and travelled everywhere. They had opened Pandora's box and rifled it of its contents, but not one of them had found

Hope at the bottom. He could not but allow that they were erudite, refined, polished to excess; but the refinement seemed to have undone the work of travel and experience; it had taken the life out of these men and extinguished in them the last spark of spontaneity. Art had overcome Nature; the fine-spun inner clothing had completely wrapped up and overlaid that fine-spun inner flesh that we call temperament and genius. There could be no passion where there was no fire; but the curious fact remained that in every sentence enough passion was breathed forth to outdo Cleopatra and Sappho. Rupert laughed inwardly when he perceived that he could remember only the names of women to match these *simulacra* of men.

Yes, they were anarchists surely. They denied, doubted, disparaged; they had nothing but refined scorn for all that makes life worth living. They called nothing into existence; they satirised everything that was not sensuous feeling, that did not feed delightful moments. Glanville had long detested *morbidezza* in painting; he saw it here and hated it in literature and life. The deity worshipped by this company was Ἔρως ἄπτερος,—the wingless, earthly love which turns life into a frenzied lyrical chant, and steeps the senses in earth-born perfumes. In like manner the high thoughts which for him made the literature of the world an inspired, heroic Bible, sank down here to the wine-crowned parables of Hafiz. Had he come by mistake into a Paradise of sensuous delights instead of the ambrosial supper for which Ivor had prepared him? Was the Duke of Adullam no better than this? He had supposed that transcendent disdain of conventionalities lay at the root of his daring conduct. If he was only a treble-distilled Sybarite, a nature all softness and attar of roses, how came Ivor Mardol to be intimate with him? Rupert, who had said very little hitherto, looked at them both and wondered.

The Duke caught his eye. 'I cannot thank you enough,' he said to Glanville in a most winning voice, 'for bringing our John the Baptist back again.'

'Do you mean my friend?' said the artist. 'I was not aware that he had been preaching in the wilderness. I thought he was always sure of a good audience among——'

'Hush,' said the Duke, with a well-feigned expression of dismay, 'it matters not among whom. But look at the glasses standing by him; you will see that he deserves his name.'

Rupert glanced across the table, and perceived that Ivor had taken no wine. The array of glasses stood empty and dishonoured.

'You see,' said the Duke, 'such is the defiance held out by our friend on the first night of our restored amity. He will not touch wine or strong drink. Like another Baptist—though I may have my doubts whether he is heralding a fresh Gospel—he symbolically rebukes the New Paganism, of which wine is the emblem and Dionysus the father. You, I know, will be on our side. Your paintings have nothing of John the Baptist in them.'

'Truly not much,' returned the artist, smiling; 'but I have long since given up the thought of persuading my friend to enjoy life. Lately,' he went on, with a bitter meaning in the words, 'he may have come to view things in a more joyous mood, and to find nectar in the rosebud.'

'Indeed?' cried the Duke eagerly. 'What, the Spartan turned Epicurean! Pray take off his pallium and show us the man of pleasure beneath it.'

'I may some day,' was Rupert's grave answer. 'At present I am not sure that he has not kept a second pallium in reserve.'

Ivor looked at him uneasily. Was Rupert jesting or in earnest? It would serve no good purpose to let the Duke misunderstand.

'His Grace knows,' said Ivor, 'that I was brought up a water-drinker and vegetarian. I admit that I have not kept my creed entire. I eat the flesh of bird and beast, as you see; but I cannot become a complete renegade, so I abstain from wine.'

'And you still condemn luxury?' asked the Duke.

'Not among Athenians,' said Ivor, smiling. 'I wait till I get to Sparta.'

'You catch the allusion?' the Duke inquired, addressing the artist, who replied that he did in a measure.

'Let me endeavour to fill up the measure,' said the

Duke pleasantly, at the same time keeping his fingers twined about the stem of his champagne glass, which an attendant was replenishing. 'What we have to consider—we, I mean, to whom the future outweighs the present—is what sort of republic shall succeed the monarchies now going to pieces all over Europe before our eyes. Shall it be a republic of all the virtues, or a republic of all the pleasures——?'

'Why not combine both?' said Rupert.

'There spoke the artist,' exclaimed his Grace of Adullam, —'the artist to whom pleasure is only a form of virtue, or virtue a form of pleasure. But it cannot be, I fear. You know there are bourgeois virtues which it is not fit for a gentleman, and much less a lady, to practise. And there are gentlemanly vices the absence of which in our republic would make it, what I sometimes dread it is going to be, excessively dull.'

'That was for a long while my objection to Socialism,' said Rupert; 'it might be justice personified, if you please; but how distressingly ugly the ancient dame appeared!'

'Oh quite, quite,' said one of the guests with gentle horror; 'a state of things in which one would be forbidden to scent one's self with sandal-wood because it was of no service to draymen!'

'And where, as there were no poor, there could be no rich,' said another. 'Think what would become of you and me if we happened not to be rich. We should expire in agony within twenty-four hours.'

'It is just as well, then,' interposed Ivor, with a doubtful smile on his features, 'that you decided not to be born at Sparta. You remember the law of Lycurgus about those who were deformed from their birth, and Taygetus?'

'What, then, are the rich, and the artists, and the cultivated minority in general, to do when the good time comes?' demanded Rupert; 'Taygetus will not be large enough to hold them, any more than the valley of Jehoshaphat will hold everybody at the Last Day.'

'You have stated the problem,' said the Duke, 'and it behoves those whom it chiefly concerns, that minority of which the existence would be imperilled,—and all we at this

table belong to it,—to discover the solution. Sparta will clearly be fatal to us. I have been saying, therefore, to such as I could influence—they are not many—why not try Athens? One or the other we shall surely come to.'

'But neither of them,' said one of the grave old men that had not yet spoken, 'was a republic. You don't suppose all that dwelt in Athens were free citizens. And at Sparta, besides the ordinary slaves, there were the Helots.'

'I grant you,' said the Duke, 'as much ancient history as you can require. But I am still anxious to know what will become of us, who are not dead and illustrious, when there is a universal Republic and no guillotine for aristocrats.'

'These are mere questions of the day,' replied the old man. 'Why trouble ourselves with what is in all the newspapers? Art and literature—surely these are a realm of serene tranquillity in which we may live. The rest is like a far-off storm at sea.'

'Yes,' said Rupert; 'we may escape into the Ideal until the floods invade it and swallow artist and poet alike. The waves are mounting, and who will build us an ark?'

'Just so; I like your way of putting it,' said the Duke. 'There will be hardly *terra firma* left on which to build an ark, even as small as Noah's, if we do not begin at once. But suppose we could teach the many-headed monster that he need not be afraid of us, that our existence enlarges the possibilities of his, that even luxury will provide bread for his table?'

'He will want your luxury, too,' said Ivor, 'as soon as he can lay hands on it.'

'Well, let him,' answered the Duke, 'and then he may come to me. I will show him that luxury, though indispensable to dukes and the like unhappy creatures, would only take away his chance of happiness if he gave himself to it. However, what we want is Athens. The barbarous interlude, the sort of medieval *mystery* which we know as the Christian religion, has come and is nearly gone. We shall see it out. What remains but the only genuine civilisation which has made man human,—made him free, scientific, artistic, passionately poetical? That is all

summed up in the name of Athens. There is no other. Sparta, Corinth, Rome, are provincial towns in the republic of the Ideal. And, therefore, we citizens of the future must call ourselves Athenians and resuscitate that humanising polity.'

'Do you propose to make an Athens of London?' inquired Rupert, whose mind went back to the days and nights he had been spending among its hospitals, workhouses, back lanes, and mortuaries. 'I fancy you had better burn it down first, by way of a beginning.'

'Will your friend Ivor Mardol,' inquired the Duke in his turn, 'transform it to a Sparta where there shall be neither slaves, Helots, nor black soup? and he addressed himself to the morsel of woodcock on his plate while waiting for an answer.

But Ivor interposed. 'I never said I was a Spartan,' he replied calmly, 'but that is no reason why I should allow that Athens and luxury are synonymous. I think a time may come—it will come, as I hope—when nothing will be deemed worthy of men except what gives them clearer brains and more generous feelings. The art of living stands in as urgent need of revision, nay of revolution, as the art of governing. Who is there that knows much of either?'

'Ay,' said the Duke, laughing, 'I told you so. We have come round to the Baptist, with his locusts and wild honey.'

Coffee was served, and they adjourned to the *salon* in which the Duke had received his guests on arriving. In no long while about half of those present took their leave. Rupert, who could not tell whether his 'examination,' as Ivor called it, had begun or was already over, kept his eye on that suspicious friend, whose reserve had hitherto concealed from him this extraordinary acquaintance with the Duke of Adullam. All reticence between intimates—though some must be unavoidable—has this inconvenience: when one secret has come to light a hundred may be suspected, and, like a casket in which a false bottom has been discovered, the friendship will seem to be lined with reserves innumerable. If Mardol could be on such terms with the Duke, yet his nearest friend not know it, why should he not have been acting throughout on prin-

ciples which would make his loyalty a pretence and his affection a snare? But while Glanville was chewing the cud of this bitter fancy, the Duke approached and invited him to the smoking-room. Ivor, who was standing at no great distance and saw the motion, nodded approval and prepared to follow. The way led up a flight of marble steps, along a closed verandah, and into a room illuminated from above with a mellow radiance. It was the electric light glowing through yellow and crimson roses which seemed to hang from the trellis of an arbour, while mats of gorgeous colours strewed the floor, Indian shawls of dead golden hue fell over the entrance and the windows, and a divan of softest texture, covered with pale yellow satin, ran round the walls. As in the dining-chamber, so here was audible the sound of rippling water mingled with the plash of a fountain. The air was not heavy with perfume, but there hung about it the faint, yet pungent, fragrance of Eastern tobacco, in which a whole world of reminiscences —Cairo and the Golden Horn, and far-off Hindustan— seemed to dose and dream.

'Is this your Nihilist conclave?' whispered Rupert to his companion, as they passed the enchanted gateway, and the crimson and golden light came streaming over them.

'Why not?' returned Ivor; 'do you think the Indian shawls will make a difference? It is the men, not the room, that constitute a meeting.' They flung themselves on the silken divan.

'Ah,' said Rupert under his breath, 'this is perfect.' He meant the apparition of a brown-skinned Nubian boy, of exquisitely regular features, and in Oriental costume of crimson, with a yellow turban round his head, who advanced towards them silently when they sat down, and offered them in turn a bowl of meerschaum with twisted tube and tobacco of their choice. Ivor looked at the boy and laughed, at the same time putting the narghileh away with his hand. The Nubian, if such he was, laughed back to him, and in doing so displayed a range of pearly teeth between his beautiful lips. He, too, must be familiar with Ivor's ways, said Rupert to himself. At that moment the Duke, turning round, caught sight of the pantomime, and shook his head mournfully.

'You smoke, I am sure,' he said to Rupert. 'I can see that you believe in the sacred fire. This frost-bound philosopher,' indicating Ivor, 'is an infidel and deserves to be immolated on a pyre of cigarettes. Yes,' he went on, 'happy is the man that has learned to smoke from his youth up. It is the one consolation that can never fail him. But now, Mr. Glanville, nerve yourself for the ordeal. You are not ignorant of what is before you.'

'Well, I am rather,' answered Glanville. 'I understand that dinner was what Freemasons call "open lodge." But what may be coming next I certainly cannot say.'

'Dinner,' replied the Duke, 'never can be anything but open lodge. It is merely the vestibule of truth. But the smoking-room is her sanctum. Amid these clouds—the only incense left us—she reveals her lineaments, as you will speedily perceive.' Then changing his tone and becoming all at once serious, 'My dear artist, I presume you are aware that you have thrust yourself into considerable danger in coming hither?'

'Very likely I have,' said Rupert, taking the narghileh from his lips. 'What then?'

'Why then,' answered the Duke, 'everything depends, not on your courage,—I should be the last to call it in question,—but on the degree of earnestness with which you have come to us.'

At this juncture Rupert's friend rose from the divan, and went over to a group of guests who were smoking at a little distance. Glanville and the Duke were in some sense alone, but if either raised his voice the conversation would reach listening ears. At present the Duke's subdued tones were a hint that he desired the colloquy to be carried on between himself and Rupert only.

The latter, with an inquiring look in his eyes, faced the Duke, who sat sideways on the divan and smoked very placidly. 'Well?' said his Grace.

'I do not know what the earnestness means of which you speak,' said Glanville, 'or what guarantee will satisfy you.'

'There is only one condition, and it is guarantee sufficient,' replied the Duke. 'What have you lost to put you at enmity with the social order?'

Rupert gave a short, bitter laugh. 'Is that all?' he said. 'I might, if I were overbold, ask your Grace that question. What have you lost?'

'Everything,' replied the Duke simply. And when Glanville stared, 'Come,' he said, raising his voice, 'this gentleman will not believe that a duke can be a Nihilist. How shall I convince him?'

Four or five of the others, including Ivor, came at these words, and, in the language of the theatre, grouped themselves, dramatically, round the Duke and the artist. The rest seemed to take no notice and went on with their smoking. The Duke waited, as if for some one to counsel him.

'Tell him your life and adventures,' said one.

'Too long,' put in another, as he turned to light a fresh cheroot.

'Tell him mine, then,' retorted the first.

'Yours is too singular to have a moral,' said the second. 'It is horrible besides, and one must not begin with a nightmare.'

'The rest are little better,' said the man whose story, apparently with his consent, was declared to be a nightmare. And there was a pause.

'But,' said the Duke, 'we cannot stay here all night. What is to be done?'

He reflected for a moment, amid the perfect silence which followed his words. The fragrant ascending clouds veiled with prismatic vapours the yellow and crimson light of the flower-like lamps. Existence, so curtained about with webs of divers colours from the Indian loom, so penetrated with aromatic drugs, so wrapped in dreamy lawns of smoke, and illuminated with the charmed rays that fell softly from above, seemed to the artist a drowsy, delicious, trance-like state wherein was neither pain nor pleasure, but only luxurious repose. Why not go on dreaming thus for ever? thought Rupert. There would come no visions of an arduous ideal through those silken folds, not even the sound of poetry or music, to suggest the painful sweet reminiscences which might stir a man to action. The existence which was all love, and passion,

and loss, had vanished into the dark night outside. Why should it return and vex him any more?

The Duke touched his hand. 'You are falling asleep with your eyes open,' he said; 'look up and listen.' Rupert turned slowly towards him with such an expression as we may fancy they had who dwelt in the Lotosland, where it was always afternoon.

'All right,' he said, 'I am listening.'

'Look round you also,' the Duke insisted sharply, and his voice became very stern.

'You wish to be one of us. Here, then, are seven men who have joined the party of despair. Can you tell why?' He paused, and Rupert, gathering his faculties together, replied:

'How should I know? I never saw one of them before except Ivor.'

'And he,' said the Duke slowly, 'like the rest of this company, has a shattered existence.'

'It is a lie,' exclaimed Rupert, springing up; 'he has shattered mine; he has broken my heart.' Ivor looked at him, long and sorrowfully, but said nothing.

'Right, right,' said the Duke with amazing tranquillity; 'at last I hear the cry of a wounded spirit. Why, man,' he went on, addressing Rupert, whose dreams had fled like a troop of frightened deer, 'do you suppose we are playing for amusement? If your friend had not assured me that a great grief had smitten you through, these doors had never opened to you.'

Rupert, dumbfounded at so novel an experience, knew not how to answer. It was clear that, be the game jest or earnest, he was playing with men vastly superior to himself in resource and cunning. The Duke seemed to perceive what was passing through his mind. With a gentle but decisive grasp he drew Rupert to his seat again, and while the others stood about in their careless attitudes, he went on:

'You have, perhaps, my dear friend, confounded us with the ornamental mysteries of the last century. I do not mind being taken for a Rosicrucian, or Mesmerist, or what not, by the crowd standing and staring about the doors. It is as well they should think we are not much

'But come,' he exclaimed after a pause, in the lighter tone which he had affected during dinner; 'you want to hear what has made me, the Duke of—of Adullam,' he said, smiling maliciously, 'a Nihilist. Can you not see for yourself?'

Rupert shook his head. He wanted the Duke to go on. Then said his Grace, 'Look at me. The one sufficient reason why I should detest the present order of things is that I not only was born great, but have had greatness thrust upon me. You ask what society has taken from me. I answer, a motive for exertion, an interest in life.'

'But you have enormous interests,' said Rupert.

'True; but no interest. I cannot go to seek my fortune as young heroes do in the story-books. I have more already than I know how to manage. If I were capable of earning a name in science or literature I must not attempt it. A Duke that writes verses or volumes on chemistry is always slightly ridiculous. Besides, I could do neither. One thing lay within my reach. As Leader of the House of Commons, as a democratic Prime Minister, I might have governed the nation and put into effect the true principles of social order. But,' he concluded, laughing, 'when I was on the point of beginning, and had nearly broken up the party lines which have made injustice and oppression secure for the last two centuries, fate stepped in and insisted on my becoming a Duke and a nonentity.'

'That was hard,' observed Glanville, smiling gravely. 'No wonder you wish to pull down the House of Lords.'

'Yes,' replied his host; 'a state of things in which a man must become a Duke, whether he likes it or no, is simply unreasonable. In the world of the future those only shall have prizes that are capable of enjoying them.'

When he had reached this point in his half-serious, half-satirical remarks, the Duke rose and, taking one of the guests with him, went away. Another who had been standing near in silence addressed Rupert, as he seemed hesitating whether to follow them or remain.

'The Duke will come back presently,' he said. And then, after a while, 'Our host finds pleasure in making his

earnest appear like jest. But you may take for granted that no man living has had a more melancholy experience.'

'How so, if it is not a secret?' inquired Rupert.

'Oh, there are secrets and secrets. The history of the Duke of Adullam would be frightfully strange in your ears were you told merely what I know, and some others in this room. But, as he remarked, you have only to look at him and you can imagine what kind of secrets have made up his life and taken the glamour from it. He is the victim of nature as of society. The trial has been too much for a mere man. Consider his fascination, grace, and accomplishments. They would make him miserable in any station, high or low. They have given him every pleasure without stint; they have filled his cup to overflowing with the enjoyment of which others crave a single drop to intoxicate them. He has drained the goblet, and for him the intoxication is past. He cannot be deluded any more. Were he a great genius he might go on forging delusions for himself and living upon them, as we lesser mortals accept delusions ready made, with docility and gratitude, never asking how they came to be. The Duke, for his misfortune, is neither a fool nor a poet. He is clear-headed, self-controlled, accustomed to the childlike devices of men who come to him enamoured of his influence, and of women that have fallen under the spell of his enchantments. He understands the human animal whose governing motive is self-interest. I do not say he cannot love, but he cannot believe in love, and hardly in friendship. He is, therefore, very exquisite,—and very corrupt. And he knows it, and wonders whether in the boundless universe there may not be something which would cure him of his disease of realism,—an ideal the possession of which should not be fatuity, disappointment, and sickness of spirit.'

'You describe an old complaint,' said Rupert; 'I suppose that his private *ennui* has been endeavouring to transform itself into the pain of the world. It is a pity he has not something to cry for.'

'A great pity,' replied the other; 'but I do not see how he can be wounded. His most dreadful quality is

to be invulnerable. Who was the man at the stake that shrieked out to the bystanders, "I cannot burn; for God's sake, help me to burn"?'

'Ridley or Latimer, I forget which,' answered the artist; adding, 'now I understand the Duke a little better. *Ennui* is, I daresay, the torment of the damned; and in those who have never felt it not likely to excite compassion.'

'I do not believe,' said Ivor, who had been sitting by all this while without a word, 'that the Duke was ever in love, though he may have fancied he was. He has been too much adored—a god enshrined above the multitude for their worship.'

'And now,' said the stranger, taking him up, 'he has got tired of them and their worship, and has leaped down from the altar and begun demolishing the temple.'

'It is the story of the French *noblesse* repeating itself,' said Rupert; 'first, Louis Quinze and Voltaire, then the Fourth of August.'

While they were talking, the subject of their conversation returned. He took Ivor affectionately by the arm and, whispering some words in his ear, seemed to be sending him away. Ivor left the room; and the Duke, approaching Rupert, said graciously, 'Will you come to my study for a moment?'

The artist bowed and followed him as he led the way through the verandah. They traversed several rooms, which were brilliantly lighted, and only looked the more solitary for the air of expectation that seemed to hang over them. Glanville as he passed could not forbear the tribute of an admiring glance at the paintings, statuary, and curious furniture with which they were adorned. The Duke's study, in comparison, was plain and simple, containing all the requisites, daintily mounted, of that extensive correspondence, much of it in cypher, which his Grace of Adullam carried on. At no time had he been indolent; perhaps the secret of his unhappiness lay, as he said, in the excess of energy for which he could find neither scope nor occasion. He motioned the artist to a chair, took one himself, and while the fire sparkled in front of them, turned down the lamp till only a ruddy twilight reigned in the room.

'Now,' he said, 'we are alone, as you desired. Ivor Mardol is not hidden behind the arras; and what you tell me shall sink into silence on the instant. I have received many a confession here, but none has gone over the threshold.'

While he had been following the Duke, Rupert's mind had not ceased to busy itself with the question whether he should still try to fence, or surrender, and throw himself on his opponent's generosity. The figure of the Jew, Bernstein, seemed to rise and mock his hesitation. Confide in the Duke? But that would be the same thing as confessing to Ivor. How could he possibly tell that they were not in collusion? Nay, the horrible thought crossed his mind that Hippolyta might be in that very house, hidden where he was least likely to seek her out. His blood turned cold as he dwelt on it. However, he was sick of dissembling. He did not doubt that if he chose he could go on playing his part as hitherto, but the recoil when the play was at an end would be terrible. Why should he not speak and have done with it? Were these men guilty of the abduction? Had Hippolyta consented to be taken away? In that case they would know already as much as he could tell them. He resolved to fling his cards on the table, and let them decide the contest as they fell. The Duke waited, without a sign of impatience. He was mild and calm, and imperturbable.

'If I am to say anything,' Rupert at last began, 'it must be everything. And the history is strange—incredible, in fact.'

'I shall not find it incredible if you tell it me,' replied the Duke.

'Well, then,' said Glanville, 'I must go back to the Hermitage at Trelingham.

'A picturesque *locale*,' said the Duke of Adullam, 'as I remember it when I stayed with the Earl some years ago, in my Tory days. Something quaintly conceived, with the water and the hills round it.'

'And do you know Colonel Valence as well as the Hermitage?' inquired Rupert.

'He was not at Trelingham,' the Duke answered quietly; 'however, yes, I know him.'

'Good,' said Rupert to himself; 'now we are coming on the track. I will give him every bit of the chronicle, from the Madonna of San Lucar onward.' And he did so, condensing the narrative where he could, but leaving out nothing that he deemed of consequence, except the affection that Lady May had indulged for him, and the immediate motives connected with it which had induced Hippolyta to quit Falside and seek him in London. He found an admirable listener. When Rupert grew excited the Duke said not a word, but allowed him to recover himself at leisure; and when the sudden remembrance of his great loss choked his utterance and would not suffer him to proceed, a gentle whisper, the expression of profound and delicate sympathy, restored his spirits and animated him to complete the recital. Experienced as the Duke was in all possible combinations of passion, at certain points he displayed a keen interest, and even amazement. Once or twice he seemed about to interrupt the narrative; but, checking himself, bade Rupert, by a gesture, continue. When at length, after describing his return to Forrest House, the indications of Hippolyta's flight which he there came upon, and, in general terms, his fruitless efforts to find her, he paused and looked down, the Duke of Adullam only said, 'Have you Miss Valence's portrait?'

The artist gave a half smile, which was not pleasant to see, as he thought of the person to whom he had confided that portrait and the man who now asked him about it. He preferred Bernstein to have it before any Duke. But that it should be in the hands of either——!

'No,' he replied shortly; 'your Grace will have to draw on your memory if you desire to know what she is like.'

'I have hardly any memory,' answered the Duke, who was as quick at discovering other people's thoughts about him as they were in thinking them. 'I never saw her but once,' he continued, 'and that was some years ago, when she was a mere child. But she knows I am her father's sincere friend.'

For some time he sat lost in reflection, after which, turning up the lamp and looking full at Glanville, he said:

'Your suspicions of Ivor Mardol are absurd and unjust. I am sure that he knows nothing of Miss Valence. To conjecture, as you did in the first instance, that she had gone under his directions on a revolutionary errand was ingenious; but you should have accepted his denial. You have been very near losing your other self, who will be true when all the women you have ever cared for have turned out false.'

'But, except Ivor, she saw nobody,' returned the artist. 'What reason, unconnected with the movement, as he calls it, can she have had for flying in a moment from Forrest House?'

'It is idle to talk of reasons,' said the Duke, 'where a woman is concerned. Find me a passion, and I will unravel the knot, which at present, I confess, is insoluble. Enthusiasm—we want some infusion of enthusiasm to acccount for the madness.'

'Ah, good heavens!' groaned Rupert, 'there was no lack of enthusiasm. Hippolyta was capable of going the length of England to discover Annie Dauris, or of joining her father in Siberia. Do you think,' he said, with a sudden gesture, 'that she has done it? Where *is* Colonel Valence?'

'Not in Siberia yet,' returned the Duke, with a peculiar smile. 'I believe I can find him for you. But oh, young man,' he continued, between jest and earnest, 'how happy are you to feel such a human, such a natural grief and excitement! Do not be in a hurry to extinguish them. You are living through the most delectable chapters of your romance. You have come to the thrilling part where one-third is love, and another third anguish, and the last third uncertain hope and longing mixed in about equal proportions. Believe me, you will never live it through a second time. What would I not give for the despair, the active, poignant despair, no mere dull and chronic feeling, which I underwent in the days of my first abandonment,—not where I forsook, that would have been tame—but where I was forsaken? The throbbing of exquisite pain, the life in all its fiery ebullition, the changing dread and sudden palpitations of joy as the heavens above me closed or opened! That

was a divine anguish. And will you hasten to bring in the heavy father from a side-scene, where the old man is waiting in hat and cloak, leaning on his absurd staff, merely that you and Miss Hippolyta may go down on your knees before him for his blessing, and live happy—that is to say, bored to death—ever after? Foolish, foolish young man!'

The Duke in his fervour rose and paced the room, while Glanville, provoked and miserable, did not know whether to laugh, to storm, or to take himself out of the house. It was not long, however, before the eccentric peer sat down again, and resumed a little more seriously, 'But I perceive what I suspected to be true; you are not miserable enough to join us at this stage of your experience. The evil done to you may be repaired, Miss Valence may come back, and your discontent with social institutions will give place to an ardent desire for the delights of a fashionable wedding. St. George's, Hanover Square, will quite satisfy your aspirations towards the Ideal, and serve as your Rome and Mecca. "Journeys end in lovers' meetings, every wise man's son doth know." Is it not so? But he that would join us must have seen through the veil, and become convinced that the most solid-looking and utterly venerable institutions, from matrimony to the House of Lords, are cobwebs to hide the nakedness of existence. When you have got so far—five years, say, after your union with Miss Valence—you may knock at the door of our smoking-room again. Meanwhile, we will allow you to be an honorary member, and to see anything in which you feel an interest. As regards pains and penalties, why, you are a gentleman, and will keep your word to be secret about these mysteries of the nineteenth century. I will not even say, *Vous en serez quitte pour la peur.* You are not the sort of man to be frightened.'

Glanville heard, but he was scarcely attending. When the Duke stopped in his talk he seemed to wake from a reverie in which he had been plunged during the last few moments, and he said with decision, 'I *must* mention that I have seen your Grace, and I will not promise anything as regards Colonel Valence. Not all the fathers in the

world, nor all the societies, shall come between me and Hippolyta.'

'Beautiful enthusiasm!' sighed the Duke; 'would that I could share in it. Were I in your place, knowing the disenchantments that must come by and by, I should try to believe that Hippolyta was divided between love for me and some other love equally strong, which made her existence a flame of fire like my own. Oh, you need have no scruple in mentioning your visit here. And it may be some time before you meet Colonel Valence. He resembles your friend Ivor in being as much at home with the Spartans as with the Athenians. However, I will send you word should he come this way.'

The conference was at an end. Returning to the *salon* which he had first entered, Rupert, after bidding farewell to the Duke, who accompanied him so far, was joined by Ivor Mardol. The other guests had vanished. It was brilliant starlight as they drove to the artist's abode, where Ivor was to take up his quarters that night. The Duke's conversation, sarcastic and odd though it had been, did not fail to do Rupert one good service. It almost persuaded him that, in suspecting Ivor, he had committed an injustice. His heart was not so heavy. On the other hand, his friend made no inquiries, did not appear to feel resentment, and spoke at intervals in his usual affectionate tone, remarking, with some degree of malice, on the unexpected nature of the initiation which Rupert had gone through. 'You were wondering when the daggers and death's-head would be brought in, I could see,' observed Mardol, 'and were much disappointed when the dusky page offered you mere pipes and tobacco.'

'I am still inclined to think it was mostly make-believe,' said Rupert. 'Nihilism is the fashion, and your Duke of Adullam likes playing at it.'

'Hush!' exclaimed Ivor. They were driving along the Knightsbridge Road, and the sound of belated newsboys crying out an extraordinary edition of the evening journals came through the open carriage-window. 'Tell the coachman to stop; there is news.' The coachman stopped. They heard the word 'assassination' repeated many times.

Ivor got out, caught hold of a newsboy, and held up the paper under the street lamp. He came running back.

'What is it?' inquired Rupert languidly. His friend sprang in, pulled up the window, and said in a low voice, 'They have done it at last.'

'Done what?' said the artist.

At that moment he caught the announcement distinctly which was filling the air, and he heard the words, again and again, 'Assassination of the Emperor of Russia.'

He started in his seat, and tried in the gloom to make out his companion's face, but could not.

'Ivor, Ivor,' he cried, 'did you know this was going to happen? Tell me, for God's sake.'

'Don't ask me what I knew,' returned Ivor; 'it is unspeakable, appalling.'

There was silence in the carriage till they came within sight of Rupert's door. A ray of light penetrated the gloom and showed Ivor, with his face buried in his hands. He looked up, and said after some deliberation, 'Rupert, I am not in any way acquainted with your Colonel Valence. But I heard to-night that he was in Russia. If he is mixed up in this, there will shortly be news of him. He may escape, and he will come, as they all do, to London. If, on the contrary, he is captured, we shall have the photographs of the prisoners sent over to us, and you will be allowed to see them and discover his features, should he be among them.'

'Do you think,' said Rupert, his voice sinking to a hoarse whisper, 'that he would have exposed Hippolyta, his own child, to a danger like this?'

'A Nihilist has no children where the society is concerned,' replied Ivor. 'I fear from your description of Miss Valence that her daring and enthusiasm would have pointed her out as the very one to be selected for the post of danger. Anyhow, if her father is not dead or in the hands of the Russian police, you will soon be in the way of meeting him. I must say good-night here,' he went on, as the carriage stopped at the door, and they alighted on the pavement.

'Why,' said Rupert, 'you promised to sleep here.'

'Yes, but'—he paused and looked round—'I may be wanted at home. There will be letters,—visitors,—early in the morning. Oh, you need not take alarm,' he continued, seeing Rupert's countenance growing troubled. 'This was none of my doing. I am only an ambulance officer, one of the Geneva Red Cross, on the battlefield. But I ought to be at my post. Good-night, Rupert. Do not distrust me again. I could not bear it.'

And he hurried away. His friend took the journal which he had left, went into his study, and sat down to read it. The account was brief, as might be supposed, and he saw only that women, as well as men, were implicated. He watched and thought into the small hours of the morning; his mind was busy reckoning the times, possibilities, probabilities, which would throw light on Hippolyta's connection with the plot. He could make nothing of it all. She might have been there, such was his conclusion.

When the murky light of day came into the room he was watching still.

CHAPTER XXXII

LIGHT OR LIGHTNING?

THE torment of the next few days in Rupert's soul no words can express. He seemed to be lying on the rack, waiting, palpitating, suffering new anguish every moment, while the hours drew on and on, and would not finish. There was excitement all over Europe, of which the daily papers gave a vivid reflection,—excitement among the adherents of governments and aristocracies, which had received a deadly shock in the assassination of the Tsar; excitement as great, but felt like a subterranean earthquake, among the revolutionists that had dealt it. Rupert's one anxiety was to catch in the welter of confused voices the name of Hippolyta. He scanned the journals eagerly, and went every morning and evening to Grafton Place, in the hope of hearing through Ivor Mardol that some one had brought information from St. Petersburg. And as refugee after refugee appeared in London, but Colonel Valence did not return, and nothing was said of his daughter, the artist's despair became uncontrollable. His suspicions of Mardol woke from the slumber into which they had been cast by that evening at the Duke of Adullam's. He began to devise wild schemes of penetrating into the Russian prisons and seeing with his own eyes whether they held Hippolyta. Wandering restless and uncertain, he forgot to eat or drink, he could not sleep, his studio was abandoned, his whole existence seemed to be falling into confusion. Ivor was all kindness and brotherly love; but he could not enlighten Rupert, for he was still in the dark himself. He did not dare to hint what he surmised.

Things were in this condition, and Rupert was looking the picture of fatigue and disappointment, when Bernstein the Jew presented himself one afternoon to complain that for several days Glanville had sent him no report, not even that of his first meeting with the anarchists, which, he said, must have taken place. The artist looked at him wearily.

'What is the use of my telling you?' he said; 'you will not find out anything. You have failed utterly up to this.'

'Yes,' answered Bernstein composedly, 'I have failed. Did I not warn you that so it might be, when I heard of the twofold motive? I said, "To find Mrs. Malcolm I cannot promise." But, we say in German, no thread so fine is spun that it comes not to the sun. And thus it will prove. I have caused to be inserted your advertisements in the *Times*. There is no answer yet. Perhaps the true answer was the news from Russia. We must wait. But,' continued he, 'two things I have found. One is that there is search going on for Miss Valence by the side of ours. My people have met other people below, in the underworld of which I did speak to you when first I came. And the second, I can tell you what has happened to the young woman, Annie Dauris.'

'What?' inquired Rupert. He did not care much. Annie Dauris was nothing to him.

'She is dead,' said the Jew calmly.

'Dead?' echoed the artist in his absent voice; 'it was soon over then. How do you know?'

'Because I saw her lying dead in —— Hospital,' was the answer.

Rupert became interested. 'Ah,' he said, 'it was the first hospital I went into that night. Stay,' he continued, turning to the Jew, 'was Annie Dauris fair, light-haired, rather pretty, but with a careworn expression? Can it have been the patient I saw that could not speak and looked at me attentively?'

'Yes,' said Bernstein, 'yes, it is the same. She was brought from the lodging-house poisoned, and was, in a manner, restored to life. But she was never able to speak. While she had the fever her child was born. The mother

and the child are dead. The inquest was yesterday. Her father and her companion, Charlotte Fraser, identified the body. It was Annie Dauris, and I think she knew too much and was murdered.'

'By whom?' asked Rupert.

The Jew shrugged his shoulders. 'You would not believe me,' he said, 'therefore I hold my tongue. *You* are not a strong character, Mr. Glanville. Your friend Mr. Mardol is the strong character. He can and will turn you round his finger, and lead you about by the nose. Pardon me, but is it not so? You go to him twice daily; you sit long with him. You do not send me a memorandum. It is clear that you believe him your friend again.'

'What if I do?' exclaimed Rupert; 'you can go on searching, all the same. Who else, I wonder, is looking for Hippolyta?' he said to himself thoughtfully; 'it must be the Duke of Adullam.'

Bernstein caught the words and frowned till his black eyebrows met. An expression of alarm passed over his countenance. 'I know that name,' he said; 'it is a mock-name of a great noble who does much in my world. You and Mr. Mardol went to his house and stayed there many hours such a night. Why went you?'

'That is my business,' answered Rupert; 'and now, Mr. Bernstein, understand that I give you full permission to go on with your search, but I have no longer the assurance that my friend Mardol has done me an injury.'

'Your friend Mardol, I say, is the clever man,' repeated Bernstein. 'I will search, for it is a strange case. But if I make clear to myself that Mrs. Malcolm was in Petersburg, and is taken, or ——,' he stopped; then after a pause went on, 'shall I bring you the news, whatever it may happen to be?'

'Yes,' answered Rupert in a low but steady tone; 'let me know the worst.' He perceived that Bernstein's conjectures were taking the same direction as his own. It shook him violently. When the Jew left and he was sitting alone, with his head bowed, thinking, always thinking, as the day went on, the most terrible imaginations came flocking round him; and one, which recurred like a mono-

mania, drove him from the house. He saw himself lying on the floor of his dressing-room, shot through the heart, a pistol lying at his right hand. There was a gloomy fascination in imagining the look of deadly calm on his face, the attitude of his limbs as he lay where he had fallen, the disorder in the room, and the silence brooding over it. A little more and he would have begun to mount the stairs which led to his bedchamber. It must not be. 'Not yet, not yet,' he murmured, as though soothing a child. He would go to Ivor. He would stay under his roof to-night, and to-morrow, in the neighbourhood of his schoolboy friend. He felt chill and heartsick beyond all he had experienced. But he did not venture to sleep in his own house.

Ivor was waiting, not to give him news,—there was none,—but to say that an old friend had requested him to be that evening at the Spartans', in Denzil Lane. He proposed to take Rupert. 'It will be a stormy meeting,' Ivor continued, 'for I have not attended a lodge, except one, since you called me to Trelingham, and that ended in my banishment. But there is always some comfort. The friend I am going to meet has more acquaintance with the inner circles of our society than any man living. He is sure to know Colonel Valence under some name or other. I wish you could tell me all that you have learnt about that mysterious personage. But the Duke of Adullam has warned me not to ask.'

The low fever that had taken possession of Rupert grew upon him every hour. He did not talk; and when dinner came, eating was impossible. His friend began to think he had better go to Denzil Lane by himself and bring back what news there might be. But he no sooner proposed it than the artist, rising up, said in a melancholy tone, 'For God's sake, Ivor, do not leave me to-night. I have lost all control of my imagination. My thoughts, my fancies are suicidal. Find Hippolyta I must, or go mad.'

They left the house late, in silence, walking along the crowded streets without exchanging an observation. Ivor had his own sad thoughts, apart from the anguish of his

friend. He did not know whose fate trembled in the balance that evening, his or Rupert's. The strange acquaintance between himself and the Duke of Adullam had made it comparatively easy to face the so-called Athenians, with whom he had never entirely broken. The Spartans, as their name denoted, were much less tolerant of private opinion, and ready to inflict the severest penalties on dissentients or renegades. Ivor was walking up to the cannon's mouth. He knew his men, and did not promise himself a speedy reconciliation with them or an untroubled lease of life. And the reception he met on entering would have discouraged a bolder man.

It was the large, bare committee-room, which we remember, in the decayed house at Denzil Lane, where Hippolyta and Ivor held their first conversation. The passage was not lighted, and Ivor, leading Rupert in the dark, had to knock twice ere he gained admission. A species of warder, wearing a red sash across his breast, stood inside, jealously guarding the entrance. On opening he recognised the engraver, drew back, and seemed uncertain whether he should be allowed to pass. But at the sight of Rupert closely following on the heels of his friend the warder put out his hand, laying it rather heavily on the artist's shoulder, and said in a quick, rough undertone, 'What do you want here?' Rupert stood perfectly still. Ivor, just looking at the doorkeeper, said two or three words and held out a scrap of paper. The effect was instantaneous. The grim warder drew aside; Rupert passed in; and the two friends, making their way up the room, seated themselves, by Ivor's choice, where they could see all that was going forward and keep an eye on the door.

Rupert, somewhat roused from his lethargy, looked round and thought he had never been in such a place before. The scene resembled a night-school rather than a Socialist meeting. The great windows at either end were closed with wooden shutters and iron bars; three jets of gas hanging from the plastered ceiling threw a crude light on the benches occupied by some thirty or forty men, who seemed, by their dress and general appearance, to belong to the steadier sort of mechanics. There was a tribune, or master's pulpit,

at the upper end away from the door, which was at present empty. Near it was the table, covered with green baize, at which Hippolyta had seated herself while Ivor uttered his thoughts to her the first morning they met. But Rupert did not know that Hippolyta had ever been in the room. He felt almost as much surprise here as at the Duke of Adullam's. He had expected a larger meeting, and not this kind of people. In his mind there went with Socialism something squalid, frowsy, unkempt, and forlorn. But these men seemed to be in receipt of wages enabling them to dress decently; they had an educated look; and many of them were turning over the journals or reading written documents. Among them were evidently a certain number of foreigners. They all looked up on the entrance of Ivor Mardol. Seeing Rupert, they looked inquiringly at one another; and a second officer, in red sash like the doorkeeper, came up and asked him who he was. Rupert pointed to Ivor; again the scrap of paper was shown, again the magic working followed. The men bent over their journals and documents. There was apparently no business going on, or it had not begun.

In the midst of the silence a slight young man went from his place at the side of the hall into the pulpit, carrying with him a bundle of papers. The rest laid down what they were reading, and threw themselves into listening attitudes. The secretary, if such he was, began to run over what seemed an interminable list of meetings, resolutions, and subscriptions—a recital which, tedious though it proved to Rupert, had clearly a deep interest for the assembly, Ivor himself appearing to follow it point by point. More than once the reader was interrupted, now by low earnest murmurs of approbation, and now by marks of the reverse. A bystander would have said that in this committee of anarchists the old sections of the Revolution had renewed themselves. But the artist, weary of these monotonous proceedings, and attending but little to the hum of conversation, which by degrees grew louder, could hardly have told when the secretary ended, or what shape of man took his place in the pulpit. He did not suppose Colonel Valence

would haunt assemblies of this species; and Ivor's friend apparently was yet to arrive.

From such stupor, consequent partly on the illness he was feeling, Rupert awakened at the sound of Ivor's voice. He opened his eyes and looked about. His friend had arisen in his place, and the speaker in the pulpit had come to a pause. The rest were dead silent.

'Ay,' said Ivor, with a fine ring of scorn in his accents, 'things are going the way I foretold. But they shall not without one more protest from me. After that, you may do with me as you like. I suppose there must be martyrs of the new Gospel as there were of the old. You,' he continued, facing the man in the pulpit, 'are preaching assassination. You tell us it is an article in the creed of anarchy. And I tell you, here, not for the first time, that it is no article in the creed of humanity.'

'Sit down, can't you?' shouted one of the men across the room; 'your turn 'll come by and by. Why can't you let the man speak?'

'By all means,' said Ivor. 'It is out of order, I suppose, to protest that our society is not a company of assassins.' And he sat down, flushed and excited. Rupert pressed his hand.

The other took up his interrupted speech; and the artist for the first time heard a sermon, in well-chosen language and with apposite illustrations, on the text of dynamite. A stern gospel, which the fanatic standing before them clearly believed in. He was a thoughtful, mild-looking man, young, well educated, and fluent in address, a foreigner, or of foreign descent. He was much applauded, though not by all; and he knew when to leave off. The impression made was deep and solemn, like that which a High Calvinist might have produced in his epoch by proclaiming that hardly any one present would be saved, and by adding that the more of them were lost the greater would be God's glory. As soon as he turned to come down from the pulpit, Ivor stood up again. Voices cried, 'To the front, to the front;' but he did not stir. The noise died away. Looking very steadily at the brethren who crowded nearer to him, he said, 'I doubt that I belong to you, and I will not go into your tribune.'

There was a strong murmur of disapproval, which seemed to loosen his tongue.

'How should I belong to you,' he cried, 'when you will take warning neither by the Revolution nor by the Governments, when you are mad enough to dream of creating a new world by the methods which have ruined the old? You disown your greatest teachers. You—I say you—are restoring absolute government, the Council of Ten, the Inquisition, and the Committee of Public Safety. You, as much as any king, or priest, or aristocrat, stand in the way of progress.'

There was a great outcry. 'Proof, proof,' exclaimed some; 'renegade,' 'reactionary,' 'traitor,' came hurled from the lips of others, while Ivor stood unmoved amid the commotion he had excited. He smiled disdainfully, and lifted his hand to command silence, but for a time it seemed as if the meeting would break up in confusion. There were two or three, however, bent on restoring order and hearing what he had to say. The tumult grew less, and Ivor, as soon as he could make himself audible, exclaimed, 'Do you want proof? It is waiting for you. I will prove myself no renegade by showing who is. I say that this lodge was founded on our faith in humanity. Its creed, when I joined it, condemned regicide, assassination, and private war. It would have condemned dynamite, had that hellish weapon been invented. I say again that I am a son of the Revolution, which has made freedom possible and will make it a universal fact, if we and the like of us do not throw it back a thousand years. What are my proofs? you ask. They are illustrious and decisive parallels; they are the principles on which alone a scientific and progressive reconstruction of society can be attempted. Do you believe that Voltaire or Goethe would have countenanced regicide while the printing-press remained? Would Rousseau have taught Émile the Gospel of dynamite? Is Victor Hugo a mere and sheer anarchist?'

'Bah,' said a thickset, deep-toned German, interrupting him. 'Why quote men of letters?'

'Because they are the priests and prophets without whom no revolution could have existed,' returned Ivor;

'because they see the scope, and measure the path, of our endeavouring; because it is by their methods, and not by yours, that we shall win.'

'Slow methods,' retorted another, 'while the people are starving.'

'Dynamite will not help them to live,' said Ivor. 'You may blow up Winter Palaces and kill Emperors with it. You will not gain the intelligent, or the men of science, or the good anywhere, by the sound of its explosion.'

'We want a mental and spiritual democracy as well as the rest,' interrupted a third; 'we care not a jot for aristocracies of intelligence or benevolence. That is why we call ourselves Sparta.'

'I know,' said Ivor, his face kindling; 'but your new Sparta is worse than the old. *You* aim at a democracy! Yes, at one which seen from behind is despotism. You will not tolerate differences of opinion; they must be abolished with the dagger. That is your Inquisition. You make a slave of every man that joins you, and punish his so-called infractions of the rule with death. That is your Council of Ten. You decree the destruction of the innocent, the blowing-up of cities, the plunder of the poor by your howling rabble. That is Saint Bartholomew and the Committee of Public Safety. Oh, my friends, you need not lose patience,' he went on, as the interruptions began again. 'When I have spoken to the end there will be time enough to kill me. But this, in the face of your threatenings, I repeat, that you have forgotten the very purpose of the Revolution.

'Have we?' was the cry. 'Let us hear it, then.'

'Read it in Victor Hugo,' he replied, 'if nowhere else. The Revolution means liberty and light. It means equality in the best things, the only things worth having—love and justice and truth. It means reason, not dynamite. Ah, my brothers,' said Ivor, his voice softening, 'how comes it that we have lost faith in the heart, the mind, the brain of Humanity? Why must we turn, like wild beasts, to our fangs and our claws, to the poison of the rattle-snake and the teeth of the tiger?'

'Why?' exclaimed one who had not yet spoken; 'be-

cause we are fighting with tigers and rattle-snakes. How else are we to conquer?'

'Your conception of humanity, then,' said Ivor, 'does not include the governing classes. Have all revolutionists been ignorant? have all sprung from the people? You invert the pyramid; but your anarchy is only aristocracy turned upside down. You want the guillotine, the infernal machine, the flask of nitro-glycerine, as the Governments want their hangman and their headsman. Oh, worthy successor of Robespierre, I congratulate you.'

'Robespierre was the greatest and holiest of revolutionists, always excepting Marat,' answered the other sullenly.

Ivor was not to be daunted. He went on with his theme. 'How did Robespierre differ from Torquemada?' he inquired. 'Their views of the next world might not be the same, but they were pretty much of a mind in dealing with this. If the Jesuits were regicides on principle, were the Jacobins any better? A fine revolution,' he exclaimed, 'when you change the men, but carry out the measures more obstinately than before; when you snatch the people from the lion's mouth to fling them to jackals and hyenas! You tell me that force alone will conquer force. It was not by force that Christianity won its way to Empire. When it took up the sword it struck, indeed, a deadly blow, but into its own heart. Are we going to repeat the mistake, and abolish the principles of '89 by the guillotine of '93? Conquer force by force? Not in this battle, be you sure of that. It is a battle against darkness, and only light will scatter it. Therefore I conclude,' he said, raising his voice and speaking with impassioned earnestness, 'that the resolution which would commit our lodge to a policy of dynamite is nothing short of apostasy from the principles on which it was founded; and I, for one, will dare or endure the utmost rather than assent to it.'

'What will you put in its stead?' The question rang out clear through the room, drawing every eye towards the speaker, who had come in while Ivor was replying to the interruptions of his opponents. He was a tall man, wrapped in a cloak with which until now he had covered his face

where he sat by the door. At the sound of his voice Ivor gave a start. Rupert, looking that way, saw the man rise from his seat and press towards the tribune. He let his cloak fall, and from that moment the artist's eyes were rivetted on his pale and haughty countenance. Again, as at the beginning of Ivor's speech, there was complete silence, and the men present looked at one another in expectation of something unusual. Ivor, standing up while the stranger passed, made no attempt to resume. The stillness became intense.

'You are debating a question to-night,' said the stranger, as he looked at them from the tribune he had mounted, 'on which the future of the world hangs. Let me help you to solve it. All the lodges in Europe have been debating it too, since a certain afternoon when the telegraph brought news from Petersburg. The French Revolution has become cosmopolitan; the nations are on the march, and they must have their '93. Anarchy first, then order. When France challenged the kings to battle, it flung them the head of a king. We have done more; we are going to pull down the Europe of the kings, with all its wealth, feudalism, ranks, and classes, till we have swept the place clean. And,' he paused, 'our gage of battle is the shattered body of the Tsar.'

There could be no mistaking how the applause went now. It was violent and vociferous. The stranger hardly seemed to notice it. When silence was restored he went on in a musing voice, low but exceedingly distinct, as if speaking to himself. 'When I was a boy I too had my dreams,' he said, and he glanced towards Ivor. 'I believed in Goethe and Voltaire, in Victor Hugo and the sentimentalists. I thought the struggle was for light. I see it is for bread. Look out in the streets to-night and consider the faces that pass. Beyond these walls,' his voice sank lower, but it was wonderfully clear throughout, 'lies the anarchy of London. Rags, hunger, nakedness, tears, filth, incest, squalor, decay, disease, the human lazar-house, the black death eating its victims piecemeal,—that is three-fourths of the London lying at these doors. Whose care is it? Nay, who cares for it? The piles of the royal palace are laid deep in a lake of blood: And you will leave it standing? You

talk of light; you prefer sentiment to dynamite and assassination! What a meek Christian you are!'

'No,' returned Ivor, with heightened colour in his face, 'I am neither meek nor a Christian. The lake of blood is a terror to me as to you. That is not the question. You know me too well to imagine it,' he said almost fiercely. 'The question is whether a second anarchy will cure a first. I say no. I prefer sentiment to assassination? Very well, why should I not? But I prefer reason and right even to sentiment. I appeal to what is deepest in the heart of man.'

The stranger laughed unpleasantly and resumed, as though dismissing the argument. 'I have seen battles,' he said, 'in which there were heroism, and madness, and the rush of armies together, and the thunder of cannon, and wild, raging cries in the artillery gloom, enough to intoxicate a man with the bloody splendours of war. But I never beheld anything more heroic or glorious'—he smiled, his voice fell, and he gave a long, peculiar glance down the hall—'than the overture to our great enterprise. It cost many days to think it out; it was accomplished in a moment.' Then, in the strange, musing tone of one that has a vision before him, 'I saw him stagger, lean his arm against the parapet, and fall, shattered as with a thunderbolt. It was not the death of a man; it was the annihilation of a tyranny.'

'And the springing up of a fresh tyranny from his blood,' cried Ivor, unable, amid the cheering of the others, to contain himself.

'Ah, it was a fine sight,' continued the speaker, as though he had not been interrupted, 'and new in its kind. The great White Tsar has often been murdered—by his wife, his son, his brother; Nicholas committed suicide, and so did Alexander the First. But never until now have the people done justice on their executioner.'

Then in the same quiet voice, where passion was so concentrated that it gave only a dull red intensity of expression, but none of those lyric cries that lift up the soul, he recited, without naming person or place, the tragedy of which he had been a witness and one of the prime movers. No sound of protest came while he was speaking. The audience hung spellbound on his words; and the sombre,

sanguinary picture unrolled itself in all its dreadfulness before their vision. Like a tragic messenger, he told the tale graphically, yet as though he had no part in it; but the conviction, unanimous in that meeting, of the share he had taken added a covert fear, a wonder not unmixed with something almost loathsome, as the man stood there, his hands clean, but the scent of blood clinging to his raiment. Ivor listened, his head bowed down, motionless. Rupert never once turned his eyes from the stranger, who moved along the lines of the story swiftly, quietly, painting with lurid tints, and not pausing till he had shown the mangled remains of the victim wrapped in his bloody shroud.

'That was not all the blood spilt in the tragedy,' he concluded. 'We, too, lost our soldiers, but they were willing to die. And now that you have seen the deed through my eyes, judge whether it was rightly done.'

'Stay,' said Ivor, rising again, and in his agitation leaning heavily upon Rupert's shoulder, 'before you judge let me ask on what principles your verdict is to be founded. Will you take those of the Revolution, or return to those of Absolutism?'

'The Revolution, the Revolution,' cried many voices.

'One of them,' returned the young man, 'is fraternity. Where did his murderers show pity to the Tsar? Another is humanity, to employ the arms of reason, to enlighten blindness, not strike it with the sword. Must war be perpetual, or where is retaliation to cease? I have always thought that pardon, light, and love were the watchwords of our cause; and I looked forward to the day when men should live in peace with one another. To be a man, I understood, was to bear a charmed life, on which no other man should lay a daring hand. Murder, I was told, is sacrilege. Am I now to unlearn all these truths, and join the crusade of dynamite-throwers instead of the crusade of reason? That is the counter-revolution indeed. I, for one, will have nothing to do with it. Take my vote, which condemns anarchy, whether in the heights or in the depths, and let me go.'

He moved out of his seat towards the door, pulling Rupert after him. In an instant the way was barred. Some

few, whose secret thoughts had been expressed in Ivor's indignant language, held aloof; the rest were all speaking excitedly, and reiterating the words 'traitor' and 'informer,' which had been previously hurled at the head of the dissentient. Ivor, unable to reach the entrance and surrounded on every side by angry faces and uplifted arms, was in no slight peril. But he did not seem to notice; he was collected and silent. Once he looked towards the stranger, and their eyes met. It is impossible to say what would have happened next, for more than one foreigner had drawn a knife from his pocket and there was a gleam of steel in the air, when, striding down from the tribune and pushing his way through the crowd, Ivor's antagonist arrived in front of him. The others fell back. To Rupert it appeared that they obeyed this man as a chief.

'Where are you going, Ivor Mardol?' he said in his distinct accents. 'Are you proposing to denounce your friends?'

'Denounce? What do you take me for?' replied Ivor. 'I shall never enter this committee-room again. I give up the society, and you may inflict on me any punishment you please, but I am neither a spy nor an informer. You know where to find me. I have not been hiding for the last six months. In spite of your threatenings I have walked the streets of London. These men know, for some of them have seen me.'

'And this friend of yours, who has not spoken a word all the evening?' inquired the other; 'is he, like yourself, a partisan of light or a spy?'

'It matters not what he is,' replied Ivor; 'he has authority for coming hither which even you will not dispute.' And for the third time he held out the scrap of paper.

The stranger looked at it closely, gave it back, and said, turning round to the brotherhood, 'We must let them go. It would be dangerous to have any quarrelling in this place. Public opinion is roused, and what has been done is compromising enough to the whole order. I will be responsible, and will watch over their movements myself.'

Amid confusion a strong character maintains its ascendency. The stranger was determined and cool; Ivor had

shown no timidity; and Rupert's silence implied that self-possession of the Englishman which appears so formidable a thing to the average foreigner. It would seem as though the three men settled the business among them, while the meeting looked on. 'Wait till I join you,' said the stranger, leading the friends through the lane which was made for them to the entrance. Ivor bowed silently, and refused his proffered hand. The door closed behind them, there was still no light in the passage; and not a word was spoken till the young men were in the street. Then Rupert, grasping Ivor's arm and pulling him towards the gas-lamp which shed a dull, flickering light in front of the great doorway, said with the utmost vehemence, 'Why did you tell me a falsehood? You said you did not know him. That, Ivor, that is Colonel Valence.'

Ivor staggered back. 'What, Rupert?' he exclaimed.

'Colonel Valence, I tell you,' replied his friend. 'I knew him the moment I set eyes on him.'

The engraver was bewildered still. 'Is it possible?' he said to himself. 'Ah, was that the resemblance I fancied, but could not account for, in Mrs. Malcolm?' He fell into a deep silence.

Rupert shook his arm impatiently. 'When are you going to explain?' he said. 'You knew them both, and you would never have told me. Oh, what a false friend you have been, Ivor!'

'No,' said the other, rousing himself; 'spare me your reproaches. I do not deserve them. I know that man, have known him these sixteen years; but he is Mr. Felton, not Colonel Valence.'

'I tell you,' returned the other with emphasis, 'it is Colonel Valence. Voice, and manner, and appearance,—I recognise them all. I met and talked with him in Trelingham churchyard the day after I went there.'

Ivor made him recount the incident, while they walked up and down in front of the house, waiting till the lodge broke up. But the artist was impatient, and said hardly a word of Lady Alice. His thoughts were set on Hippolyta. The old man—Colonel Valence looked older than ever—must surely know what had become of her. But would he

tell Rupert? He was rigid and unfeeling, capable of leading his child into the thick of battle and with dry eyes beholding her perish, so long as the cause triumphed. Glanville, when he had ended the short recital, turned again to cross-examine his friend. What did Ivor know of Mr. Felton? Not much, or more truly nothing, apart from the Socialist designs wherein both of them had been engaged. He still persisted in declaring that he had never communicated with Miss Valence, nor set eyes on her till she came to the spot where they were now standing. There was something in her face that vaguely recalled, he could not have said whose features, but he now saw they were Mr. Felton's. The artist thought of the documents which Bernstein had seen in Ivor's desk, in the writing of Hippolyta; but he felt ashamed to mention them. How did he know they were there?

It was a bitterly cold night, and Rupert shivered as they went to and fro in the windy street, not speaking while there was any one near, and having occasionally to pause lest the throng that at moments swept by should carry them away from the house, and Colonel Valence should escape them. For the artist was sure that he had been recognised by the old man as he came towards them from the tribune. Nothing but Ivor's perilous situation had kept him from challenging him there and then. The feeling of suspense was horrible; and Ivor, overwhelmed at the discovery that his guardian, his stern and pitiless friend, was Mrs. Malcolm's father, walked by Glanville's side, voiceless, trying to piece together the details of this strange story. In what way had his own solitary life come to be entangled with that of the woman who had disappeared, and with her father's? Was she alive or dead? His affection for Mr. Felton had never been strong; it was now annihilated by the exultant cynicism with which that prophet of evil had depicted the Tsar's tragedy. It had almost turned to loathing.

The men were coming out. Rupert, standing under the street lamp, scanned their features as they passed; and when the stream slackened made a sign to Ivor, and pushed into the hall, where a tallow candle was burning at

the head of the stairs. The man he sought was on the threshold of the committee room. Its door, wide open, showed the gas flaring within. When the last man had issued forth, Ivor, darting in front of Rupert, said eagerly, 'Mr. Felton, come this way,' and went in, followed by Rupert and the old man. No sooner was the door shut, and the three by themselves, than Ivor, in a trembling voice, cried out, 'Rupert says you are Colonel Valence. Is it true?'

His guardian looked at them in turn. 'It must have come,' he said under his breath. 'Yes, Ivor,' he went on in a louder tone, 'I am Colonel Valence. Do you know anything about me?'

Rupert, who could wait no longer, struck in. 'What has become of Hippolyta?' he asked, his face growing pale. The name would hardly pass his lips. Colonel Valence, forgetting Ivor, wheeled round, and gave an astonished glance at the artist.

'Is not she at Falside?' he demanded in turn.

'The Jew said there was no one there but the servants,' answered Rupert confusedly.

'The Jew? What Jew? Have you gone out of your mind?' exclaimed the Colonel, more and more perplexed. 'Has my daughter left home since I went away? I thought by this time you would have arranged everything.'

'She is lost,' said Rupert gloomily. He did not know what to think. He saw that Colonel Valence was troubled, but not like a man who had seen his child die, or left her in prison with the surviving assassins at Petersburg. He asked for explanations. Question and answer succeeded each other rapidly. Her father appeared to learn for the first time that Hippolyta had come to London, had taken a false name, had met Ivor Mardol. Rupert, in the presence of his friend, and to her father's face, could not describe how she had given herself to him. He kept back what he could; but Colonel Valence did not press him, did not seem to think of dishonour in connection with Hippolyta. He inquired only how many days she had been missing, what she had taken as provision for her journey, and whether she had received any letters. Rupert told all he

knew, and mentioned the second letter, besides his own, which Mrs. Leeming had handed to her the last evening she spent at Forrest House.

'That was from me,' said the Colonel, 'announcing that I should probably return to Falside in the course of three weeks. I allowed a margin for accidents, and the time is out. I told her where I was. It is conceivable that she went abroad in the hope of meeting me, or of helping me in Petersburg. Hippolyta was always a creature of impulse. She must be at Falside. Lost! No, my dear Glanville, do not think it. We will all three go down to the West to-morrow.'

'Not I,' said Ivor, turning away.

'Why not?' inquired his guardian.

He answered firmly, 'Because I have done with you, Mr. Felton. I said so to myself a hundred times while you were speaking, and I mean it. You are——' he stopped.

'What am I?' asked the other quietly, with a severe light in his eyes.

'You are worse than a murderer, that is what you are,' cried Ivor Mardol with great passion. 'Others commit bloody deeds, but you make a religion of them.'

Colonel Valence frowned. 'Boy, boy, you must not talk to me in that fashion,' he said. 'What I have advocated is justice, not murder. Have done with your tenderness for crowned criminals, and come with me to Falside.'

'I shall do no such thing,' replied Ivor. 'Good-night, Rupert. When you have found Mrs. Malcolm, let me know.'

He was going. Rupert caught hold of him. 'Dear Ivor,' he said, 'be a friend to me. If I do not come upon Hippolyta soon, I shall—— I don't know what I shall do—something desperate. Never mind Colonel Valence. Come and help in the search.'

But Ivor was not to be shaken. He kept his eyes carefully averted from the spot where his guardian was standing, in a strange attitude of grief and scorn. The Colonel did not speak, and Rupert went on entreating, but to no purpose. At last Ivor said, 'I will never come under the same roof again with Mr. Felton'—the old man winced

slightly, but was silent as before; 'never,' continued Ivor, 'while I live. If you want me, Rupert, I can go down to Trelingham and stay at the Hermitage, while you are searching for Miss Valence. I doubt, I doubt,' he concluded, shaking his head mournfully, 'that you will find her.'

'What makes you doubt?' asked Glanville.

'The way she seems to have left you,' replied his friend. 'She had a strong will, and she must have meant,—oh, my dear fellow, I know it is hard,—but she intended her flight to be a separation for ever, or she would not have left you without a sign.'

'She must be at Falside,' repeated Colonel Valence in a low voice.

'Come, Ivor,' said Rupert entreatingly.

'To Trelingham, if you please,' answered his friend. 'I know the Earl is kind and will understand that you want me. But never to that—that other house.'

Colonel Valence, in a gentler way than he had hitherto shown, said, 'Ivor, I am an old man. My principles are a part of my experience, which all the discussion in the world cannot alter. Come and stay with me at Falside with your friend, with Hippolyta. Let us enjoy a few days of happiness together.'

Such language from the stern Mr. Felton surprised Ivor. It was unlike him, not in his character. But this night had made him odious. The scent of murder hung about him yet. It was impossible that any change in his bearing could take away the guilt of what he had said and done. As a final answer, Mardol turned to the artist and said with decision, 'When you return from Falside, you will find me at the chalet. I will write at once to Lord Trelingham, if you can give me his address.'

And so saying he went out of the room, without looking round. He supposed Rupert would stay, to make arrangements for the journey of to-morrow. When he gained the street he paused, considered for a moment, and walked hastily towards Grafton Place. His thoughts were in a tumult; he scarcely knew which way he was going. In the midst of his painful and distracted musings he heard steps behind him, as of some one coming rapidly on.

A moment after Rupert was by his side. 'Why did you not wait?' he said, out of breath. 'Colonel Valence is gone. We are to travel together by the fast train at ten o'clock. Here is Lord Trelingham's address. What shall you do?'

'I will follow in the afternoon,' replied Ivor. 'But, Rupert, prepare yourself for disappointment. I am almost certain Miss Valence is not there.'

'You cannot tell me where she is, all the same?' inquired the artist, half angrily.

'I can tell you nothing, because I know nothing. I have searched where I could. Miss Desmond has not seen her. The Duke of Adullam thinks—but it matters not what he thinks. It is mere conjecture. The best thing we can do is to go back to Trelingham Court,—you to finish the Great Hall, and I to bear you company. If Miss Valence is living, she either cannot or will not inform you of her existence. You may as well wait for news at the Court as any where. You will have work to distract you.'

Rupert accompanied Ivor in silence to his own door, and went home.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE VALLEY OF PERPETUAL DREAM

THE journey from London, which Rupert and Colonel Valence undertook next day, was melancholy. In spite of his indomitable vigour and iron frame, the Colonel looked tired, said but little, and appeared to be sunk in his own reflections, which could hardly be of a cheerful cast. There were moments when he seemed dispirited. A curious experience, which he knew not whether to call pain or pleasure, was that of Rupert, as he sat opposite the gray-haired man and traced in the lines of his weather-beaten countenance the far-off likeness of Hippolyta. At a word, sometimes, the mask would seem to change, the whole expression would be soft and gentle, like that of his daughter when a pleasant thought came into her mind; but again, it vanished and the stern lines were fixed as ever. The Colonel asked no questions; he had gathered the story last night from Rupert's confused narrative, all except the motive which could have brought to so sudden a conclusion the idyll they seemed to have begun. On the other hand, he spoke without prompting of Ivor Mardol, whose resolution to break their long friendship seemed to afflict rather than to anger him. 'Strange,' he said, 'that the old man should be so much more advanced than the young! Ivor is sentimental; he talked of Victor Hugo. I daresay he writes verses. While I have gone forward with the age, he is turning back to Utopia and the idealists. He does not see that the question between Governments and people is which shall make an end of the other. But he is very noble.'

The artist replied at random. He felt the old affection for his schoolboy friend reviving; but of the argument last night he remembered nothing distinctly. He was suffering almost as on the morning when Hippolyta left him, when he sat, a ruined man, in her boudoir. The mind was torturing the body. One fear hung upon him and from time to time shook him with a passionate thrill; what if she were not at Falside, or had never been there? The journey was a forlorn hope. All he could say was that she must, in any case, have written to her father. The old man was not dissembling, he thought; had Hippolyta gone from Forrest House with his approval, he would not be taking all these pains to convince Rupert that she was lost to him. He would be following her to the Continent. She had, then, fled of her own accord. But why? It was an impenetrable mystery.

They passed through the scenery which his frequent expeditions to and from Trelingham had made familiar; at a certain junction they changed for Toxenden, which was the station nearest Falside. They saw nobody of their acquaintance. When they alighted at the small country station, looking pretty even in the lap of winter, Colonel Valence ordered a vehicle, remarking, as they entered it, 'A fortunate thing that we are not obliged to go round by Trelingham! Although, during the last seven years, I have travelled constantly on this line, never once have I encountered the Earl or any of his people. They knew when I came or went; for it was idle to disguise my name in a place where everybody remembered it. Else I have not borne the name of Valence for thirty years and more.'

'The Duke of Adullam is acquainted with it,' said Rupert.

'Ah, has he told you so?' returned the other; 'but the Duke knows everything.'

'Even the parentage of Ivor Mardol,' observed the artist.

'I daresay,' was the careless reply, as Colonel Valence settled down in the carriage.

The evening was dark and cold. The way seemed long, although Glanville knew it from his frequent riding over the country in those happy days when he was learning

more and more the worth of Hippolyta, to be, in fact, but a couple of miles. It went uphill towards the moor, then turned again rather abruptly, and kept on the bare hill-side. And now the sky seemed a huge cloud resting on another, which was the dark sullen waste, heavy and dismal in the gloom. They turned in at the steep gate of Falside. The evergreens would have hidden the lights had any been shining in the library windows. But there were none. That side of the house was quite dark. When they reached the second gate they dismounted, and Rupert stood there all impatient while the Colonel paid and dismissed the driver. No one came at their approach, although the sounds of their wheels must surely, said Rupert to himself, have been audible on the gravel-path. He followed Colonel Valence round the cottage, where all seemed deadly still, to the housekeeper's room at the back. There was a light in the window. The Colonel tapped in a peculiar way; and Dolores, the aged nurse of Hippolyta, came at once to the door. On seeing her master she began to explain that Andres had gone to the village.

'Where is my daughter?' inquired the Colonel. She looked at Glanville, whom she had not before noticed, and seeing the expression on his face, screamed out some words in her own language. Colonel Valence, answering apparently in the same—for Rupert, though he could read Spanish, had no practice in hearing it—turned to the artist, and said, 'She has not been here. There must be a letter in my study.' And he took the light which Dolores offered. The two men ran down the steps, through the covered way, and into the house, each disquieted, but neither stopping to utter his thought. The library was in perfect order, but had that woebegone appearance which comes over a room where no one has dwelt for some time. Colonel Valence, setting down the light, began, with uneasy looks, to turn over the pile of miscellaneous correspondence that lay undisturbed on the table. There were many letters, which he tore open and flung from him, when he saw they had not the enclosure he was expecting. He came to the end of them, turned back, shook them out carefully again, and sat down, fixing his eyes on the floor and not uttering

a word. Glanville was equally silent. At last Colonel Valence looked up, haggard, with the deep veins on his forehead swollen. 'Mr. Glanville,' he said, with curious formality, 'I can find nothing. My daughter must have been murdered.'

Under that dreadful shock the artist reeled and had almost fallen, but recovering himself he went to the table; and, for the third time, the correspondence was turned and examined, in the vain hope of finding a trace of Hippolyta. She had not written; there was nothing there. The two men, when Rupert laid down the last of the papers, sank into a stillness that resembled apathy. Neither stirred nor spoke. The Colonel sat with his eyes on the ground; Rupert, grasping the table with one hand, stood like a man in a dream. The candle burnt to the socket, flickered, and went out. There was darkness in the room, and far down the valley a star or two seemed to twinkle. The sound of Andres returning on horseback struck upon their ears and woke Colonel Valence from his overwhelming grief. He rose and went to the door, calling out to Andres in Spanish. The old servant stopped. There was brief colloquy between them; the Colonel did not return; and by and by lights were brought into the room, and Dolores set down a tray with supper on it by the side of Glanville. Her husband, who brought the lights, said that Colonel Valence would not appear again that night, but the stranger's room would be made ready as soon as possible. Both the old servants were in great consternation and shedding tears; but Glanville hardly noticed them, and the supper remained untasted where it had been laid. He heard the sound of Colonel Valence's footstep as he paced up and down outside on the terrace. It was a slight thing, but intolerable. Seizing his hat he ran up the steps once more, and let himself out by the little postern-gate leading to the bridge. How well he remembered that afternoon when Hippolyta brought him through it for the first time, and he followed like her dog, or some poor thing she cherished! Gone, gone! She was dead, or worse than dead, to him.

He wandered on the edge of the moor, stumbling over the great stones, but, by some instinct, never going beyond

the sound of the waterfall, which made a strange monotonous music in the night, like a sobbing ghost, he said to himself. When some hours were past Andres found him, and persuaded him to go in, speaking to the proud English gentleman with soothing words as to a child. He showed him the stranger's room. 'My first night at Falside, under her father's roof,' murmured Glanville, as he looked round him. 'This is the coming home, and the end of the honeymoon. Hippolyta is dead, and I am miserable.' He crept into bed and fell asleep. Next morning, when he woke, the fever was upon him, but he would take no heed of it. He came downstairs. Colonel Valence was gone,—to London, said the note which he had written and left for Glanville. He might be compelled to seek his daughter on the Continent. He would let the artist know if he heard anything.

A fire was blazing on the hearth, looking clear as in frosty weather. Dolores, when she had laid the table for breakfast, lingered until Rupert sat down, and then with the tenderness of the kind old creature she was, induced him to eat. He made a hasty meal, and at its conclusion was setting out from the cottage, when she asked him at what hour he would come back. He echoed the words wonderingly. 'Come back?' he said, 'never.' She insisted, and begged him to say in what direction he was going. In the same absent way he replied, 'To Trelingham.' Upon hearing that she called Andres, and between them they made Glanville stay until the pony-chaise could be got ready. He waited by the garden wall; he would not enter the house, nor even look towards it, a second time. He seemed to have no interest in himself, no purpose save that of reaching Trelingham at the earliest. When Andres appeared with the carriage he mounted silently, drew his ulster about him, and sat upright, gazing straight on before him, but speaking not a syllable, and seeming not to remark the way they went. His thoughts, meanwhile, were busy enough with it, going over the dreams, the vanished illusions of that night on which he had been driven along these very paths, in the dark, but with Hippolyta's remembrance to light up all within. Now the darkness had entered his

soul. He did not dare to whisper the name which, barely thought of, pierced him like a sword. He wanted to get away from it, to see no more of Falside, to be only the artist whose work was to be done at Trelingham. Plans for the future he had none. 'I shall be stronger,' he said, 'when I am in the Great Hall painting.' He tried to think of the frescoes, but the exertion sickened him. It seemed to him that he was neither living nor dead. He was stunned and yet suffering.

The well-known trees rose up to greet him as they came in view of Trelingham Chase. The winter-landscape, though bare in places, and taking in the wild moor with its belt of dark-blue sea, was soothing and gentle. The great house stretched its wings over the silent terrace, where no figure was to be seen. They passed the lodge, drove slowly up the winding walk by which Hippolyta had always come when she visited Lady May Davenant, and arrived at the chief entrance. The butler, who was at hand, observed Glanville's extraordinary pallor, but, with his usual discretion, said nothing except that Mr. Mardol had come the evening before, and was at the chalet. Rupert sent him a message, shook Andres by the hand, and let him go. It was a relief to see the pony-chaise depart; it had belonged to her. While he was taking off his wraps, Ivor, who had been walking near the house, came in and ran up, catching him by both hands, and, by a look, inquiring what news there might be. The artist bit his lip nervously and turned away. 'She is not there,' he whispered. That was all. They understood one another, and said no more.

It was a bad sign that Rupert would neither eat nor lie down. Capable, like all great artists, of working for many hours on end, he was also, like them, subject to fits of weariness during which he slept the day through. But now he was fatigued, and he wrought on. He made the Great Hall his abode, leaving it only to retire late in the evening to his own room, where he would throw himself on the bed, sometimes without undressing, and lie, not knowing how his thoughts went, in a state of semi-consciousness that left him more tired than the day before. His work,

however, showed no trace of fatigue. Ivor looked on with grave misgivings, astonished that he would not unburden his heart, seeing the fever on his brow, but powerless to influence him. Rupert, silent for hours, kept his friend in the Great Hall, and seemed disquieted if he went away; which led to Ivor's giving up the chalet and sleeping in his old room at the Court, next to Glanville's. He received, a few days after his arrival, a most gracious letter from Lord Trelingham, who, with his daughter and the Countess Lutenieff, was staying in Paris at the house of a Legitimist noble, M. de Flamas. In his own epistle Ivor had said that Rupert had wanted him immediately, and he had ventured to anticipate the Earl's permission to spend the necessary time at Trelingham. The Earl, in reply, hoped that Mr. Glanville was in his usual health, regretting that he had not heard from him for more than a month. Rupert, in fact, could not have said when he last wrote to Lord Trelingham. He had forgotten the name of Lady May.

And so he continued to paint the Morte d'Arthur, working from his own designs as though they had been another's, not creating but remembering, and with the refrain of his sad thoughts for an accompaniment. One evening as he was coming down the ladder from his high scaffold a fit of giddiness seized him, and but for his friend, who caught him as he slipped, the accident might have proved serious. He walked occasionally on the terrace; but he would never visit any point from which the Hermitage was visible. When the letters came he inspected them eagerly. There was nothing from Colonel Valence. Bernstein wrote several times, and Rupert did not answer. At last, when he had been working some ten days with despairing eagerness, he laid his brush down and said to Ivor, 'My brain does not seem right. I think it means fever. Take care of me when it comes, and let no one enter my room.'

Next day he was unable to rise. He slept a little, woke with a throbbing brow, and hardly knew who it was that sat by his bedside. Ivor sent for the physician that had attended Tom Davenant. When he came the patient was

wandering in his mind, talking much but unintelligibly in a low tone, and stretching out his hands every moment for water. The attack, which had been delayed by Rupert's energy for so many days, now came in full force. His reason, his life were in danger. There could be no thought of moving him. Ivor telegraphed to Lord Trelingham, and the same evening received an answer from Lady May announcing that they were coming home, and recommending the utmost care of Rupert. Though it was an abrupt termination to a visit that the Earl had long resolved to pay and was now enjoying, the good man, who liked Glanville exceedingly, at once complied with his daughter's suggestion; and they crossed the Channel twenty-four hours after the telegram had acquainted them with Rupert's situation. The Countess, not so much interested as inquisitive, and just then at a loss what to do, accompanied them.

I shall say little of Lady May's feelings. They are easy to imagine; they would take long to describe. How had she lived since her father's illness had compelled her to quit Trelingham and Rupert Glanville? As we all do when despair of some pleasant prospect has fallen upon us,—from day to day, without hope, letting the hours creep on, and finding existence like sand in the mouth. Rupert had never so much as addressed a line to her, though occasions were not wanting. He had sent the usual unmeaning messages through Lord Trelingham; but, writing at length on subjects connected with painting, and diverging now and then to social topics, he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve. To guess at his inner life was impossible. He seemed happy; the tone in which he indited these pleasant nothings was a sign of it. Had the Earl's health been less uncertain, less dependent on clear skies and medicinal waters, she would have urged him to return home, to take up his residence in town, at any rate, during the season, where they must from time to time have had a visit from Glanville. But she was tired of devising schemes which brought her no nearer the goal. She lived a proud solitary life, making the most of her music as the channel of emotions she must otherwise conceal, and conscious every

day that she was walking in a vain shadow. Of such an existence there is nothing to tell, except how long it lasted. For while there were endless changes of feeling, they bore no harvest.

And now Glanville was down with brain fever, how brought on she could not imagine. Who was to nurse him while it lasted? Any misfortune that left him helpless in her hands was welcome. They must hasten back, and keep him at Trelingham. The journey was accomplished slowly, because of the Earl; but it could last only a short time at the outside. Lady May kept down her trouble. Karina, always watching, saw nothing to lay hold of. And soon they were all once more at home.

The meeting between Lady May and Ivor was on both sides full of emotion. But the lady cared only for Rupert, —and his friend, at such a time, could not indulge in the self-torment of unrequited love. The patient's delirium had increased; he recognised no one, and he talked incessantly of the dreadful sights he had looked upon during his night-wanderings in London. Ivor thought himself bound by his injunction to let none pass the threshold of the sick-room, save the doctor and the nurse. He did not desire that Rupert's secret should get abroad; and his former suspicion that Lady May had some thought of marrying the artist, made him doubly unwilling that her presence should trouble him. But he had to deal with a determined woman. She satisfied Lord Trelingham by getting the physician to assure him that there was no risk of infection; she submitted to the jealous surveillance exercised by Mardol over every one that came near his friend; and she insisted on her right as hostess and a good Samaritan to see that all was as it should be about the invalid. She went and came, but Glanville did not look her way. Ivor gave him his medicine, contrived, with the nurse's aid, to pour liquid nourishment down his throat; and never left him day or night.

It was an extraordinary thing that, in all his raving, one name never crossed the patient's lips. It seemed to be erased from the folds of his brain, or to have sunk into the dim recesses whence fever could not pluck it forth. None

but Ivor could have told how he came to be ill. He had overworked himself and undergone exposure to cold; he must have been sickening when he left London. That was all Ivor would say. And the name of Hippolyta was never pronounced. Rupert, living over again the scenes which had followed her disappearance, recurred continually to the vision of the gray-haired woman whose form he had beheld in the dead-house—wherever it was, for he did not know. And by and by another took its place. All day long he murmured the name of Annie Dauris; he described the wild look in her eyes with which she had started up in her bed at the hospital on seeing him. When the Jew acquainted him with her death he had made no remark; his own trouble absorbed his fancy. But now he did not speak of Hippolyta. The unknown girl of seventeen, with her fair hair and pallid eyes, seemed to be staring at him, terrifying him with the thoughts of muddy death, recounting the horrors of the wicked river flowing to the sea. A stranger would have guessed some story from his words, and guessed all wrong. But Ivor took care that Lady May should not overhear them.

For weeks Rupert hung between life and death. His friend, on some pretext or other, twice drove to Toxenden, —the only occasions on which he quitted his bedside, —and walking by roundabout ways arrived at Falside. There was no news of Hippolyta. Colonel Valence had gone abroad. Ivor was thankful to have missed him.

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Such an one lives, says the Greek poet, that would be glad to die; and Rupert Glanville's story was not ended. Could he have chosen he would never have come back to a sense of misery. But neither of his life nor his death was he master. When the fever had brought him to the brink of the grave it left him. He awoke to a dull feeling of pain; he looked round, saw Ivor, and called him. The loving fellow wept tears of gratitude. Rupert stretched a white hand out of the bedclothes and asked, as men do on recovering from a swoon, 'How long have I been here?' He was told to keep still and to refrain from talking. He slept once more. Next day when he woke there was no

pain, but extreme weakness, and in that state he lay for a long time. Lady May came frequently, as often as she dared. He showed no sign of displeasure; he hardly noticed. Later on, when he was convalescent, he saw that she looked worn and thin. 'Have you had a fever, too?' he asked, with the naïve manner which comes back at that stage, a reminiscence of childhood. She smiled rather sadly, and answered that it was gone. Lord Trelingham's presence gave him evident pleasure; but he did not talk much. He would fix his eyes on Lady May as long as she stayed in the room; and when she disappeared, he gazed after her. He did not ask who she was, but Ivor sometimes thought his memory must be affected; for he seemed not to recall her name, and when he spoke, it was either of their schooldays or of the unfinished frescoes which he was anxious to go on with. Had he forgotten Hippolyta? His friend, dreading a relapse, did not venture to come near the subject. But one day, before he could prevent himself, the name slipped out. Rupert gave no sign. His countenance did not change. He answered the question that had been put to him, but it was about the Hermitage, and he passed over the once-loved name as though it had been some foreign term, or he had not heard it.

During his long illness Ivor, who opened all the letters that came, read several from Mr. Bernstein, the last of which declared that he looked on Mrs. Malcolm's recovery as impossible, and declined to prosecute the search any longer. He enclosed a formidable account. Ivor went to Lord Trelingham, borrowed the money (for Rupert was still delirious), and sent it by return of post to Mr. Bernstein. Now he did not know what to do with the receipt. Money of his own would be shortly due, enough to repay Lord Trelingham, though leaving himself poor enough for the next twelve months. But if Rupert had forgotten, why recall this frightful business? He thrust the Jew's epistles into the fire; he locked away the receipt among his own papers; and the artist, who put no questions, did not hear from the private inquiry office again.

It was midsummer, and one of the pleasantest days of the year, when Rupert came down, recovered in health,

but somewhat changed, it would appear, in disposition. He was no longer melancholy or fantastic, neither was there the same brightness about him. He seemed grateful to every one for a kind word. He sat and walked a great deal with Ivor in the course of the next few days; then he would stay longer in the drawing-room, and Lady May observed, with the most exquisite delight, that he seemed to depend on her for his comfort, and asked her often to improvise on the piano, while he sat and listened. The Countess had gone away at an early stage of his illness; she could not endure invalids. She said the thought of one in the house made her unwell. Tom Davenant, when he knew that Ivor was back again at Trelingham, wrote to him often, and in the most affectionate terms; but he was still smarting under his disappointment, and paid them no visit. So that Rupert and Lady May were almost as much alone as when they spent their mornings in the picture-gallery.

Ivor, looking on with kinder and sadder eyes than the Countess had done,—now nearly two years ago,—considered how these things might end. He spoke to Rupert casually of Falside. There was no tremor in return. He went so far, in his experiment, as to remark that Colonel Valence must be from home, and the artist replied, 'He went after meeting me in the churchyard.' Could it be possible that the episode of his affection for Hippolyta, with all its incidents, was blotted from his memory? Full of the idea, and ready to encourage it in Rupert's interest, Ivor did a bold thing. When Mr. Bernstein wrote to resign his commission, he added that Mrs. Malcolm's portrait had been returned to Mr. Glanville's house in Belgravia. Not long after, an epistle from his solicitor, which Ivor opened, apprised him of the place where Rupert and Hippolyta had lived during their brief union. The man of business required instructions as to Forrest House. Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm, it appeared, had left suddenly; the servants' wages were unpaid, and but for Mrs. Leeming, who had been sent there originally by the solicitor, the red brick mansion must have been for several months at the mercy of any one that chose to come in. Ivor, in reply, informed the solicitor of

Rupert's dangerous condition, sent money to pay the servants, and recommended that the house should be let as soon as possible. This was done, and there remained only the question of Hippolyta's portrait. Ivor now took the opportunity, while Lady May and the artist were so much together, of running up to London; called in at Clarence Gardens, opened the parcels he found there, and carried away the dangerous picture to Grafton Place. He consulted a distinguished physician, and after giving him the history of Glanville's brain fever, the events which had led to it, and the apparent loss of memory which it had caused, asked him what advice he could offer. Among other things he inquired, 'Would it be well for Rupert to marry?'

'Yes,' answered the physician, 'but not to live in the neighbourhood of his disaster. Let him marry and go abroad, practise his profession, and be kept from everything which would remind him of the lost Hippolyta.'

From that moment Ivor resolved that the marriage should take place, cost what it might to himself or to any one else. He felt a choking sensation in his throat; it was surrendering his dearest illusions. But let them go, he said, provided Rupert were safe.

On his return he found matters unchanged, the lady devoted to the gentleman, and the gentleman strangely dependent on the lady. He took Rupert aside one bright afternoon, as they were walking on the terrace, when the air was full of sweetness, the moor glorious under floating clouds, the sea flashing upon the horizon. There was a party of lawn-tennis at Trelingham, and the laughing voices of young people and the sound of their playing came up where the friends paused. 'Rupert,' said Ivor, 'why don't you marry Lady May?' He waited with intense anxiety for the answer, but it was not long. 'I never thought of it,' replied his friend, in a calm voice; 'do you fancy she would accept me?'—'Go and ask her,' said the chivalrous young man; 'she is walking at the other end of the terrace.' Glanville raised his eyes. She was alone, pacing up and down thoughtfully. He quitted Ivor, went slowly along, looking

neither to the right nor to the left, until he approached within a yard of her. She stopped and turned. 'Lady May,' he said, holding his hat in his hand, 'Ivor thinks you would marry me, if I asked you. Is it true?' Her heart gave a great leap. She put out her hand. 'Why did you not ask me before?' she said. And they walked back along the terrace together. Ivor was watching them and saw what had passed. 'God bless them,' he murmured in a half-groan as he turned away. But they were by his side. 'It is true, Ivor,' said his friend, with a subdued tenderness that had something marvellously strange in it to one who knew his fiery temperament. 'Lady May says she will marry me. Will you come to our wedding?' The promise was given. Rupert continuing, said, 'I must have done with the frescoes, however. And, Lady May,'—she trembled as he addressed her,—'when we are married we will leave Trelingham. The air is not good for me.' She was surprised; but Ivor thought, 'What good genius inspired him to say that at once?' It was a formal stipulation, so to speak. The lady cared nothing for Trelingham if Rupert were away; and with him she would have roamed the world.

Her father was visible in the library. She proposed that they should go to him without delay. The artist, apparently having no will but hers, consented; and as he looked up from his desk the Earl, to his astonishment, beheld his daughter leading Rupert towards him. It was bewildering, but Lady May laughed as she told him. 'Karina knew my secret long ago,' she said; 'this gentleman has kept his till to-day.' Rupert, with a look of great clearness in eyes and countenance, interposed, 'I meant to ask you when I finished the Madonna of the Seraphim; but I went away.' 'Ah, yes,' she answered, smiling a rebuke at him, 'you went away. But you never shall again.' Lord Trelingham was still confused. 'Are you sure that you can make Mr. Glanville happy?' he said to his daughter; 'in a marriage like this so much depends on the wife.'—'I am sure that I love him,' she answered, and Rupert thanked her with his eyes. 'Very well,' said the Earl, 'you are your own mistress, my dear. You know I never wished you to marry your

cousin, even when I thought you liked him.'—'Oh,' she said laughingly, 'because of the horoscope. But are you quite certain it was Tom's and not mine? Mistakes will happen, I suppose, even in astrology. But we believe in happy stars, don't we, Rupert?' It was the first time she had called him by his name, and her eyes sparkled. 'What was that about Tom Davenant's horoscope?' he inquired, as they left the library. 'It is all nonsense,' she said; 'something about his being drowned. I will tell you another time, not now; the day is too beautiful for sad things.' They heard the tennis-players coming from their game, laughing merrily.

'What a light there is on the waters!' murmured Rupert, as they stood once more on the terrace, with the sea in front of them. May put her hand in his, and they continued gazing in silence, side by side.

CHAPTER XXXIV

HYMEN, O HYMENÆE!

THE announcement which Madame de Lutenieff had mockingly foretold—of a marriage between the well-known artist and the daughter of a great peer—was delayed until Rupert had fulfilled his task and the frescoes were complete. They made a magnificent show, but he entreated that their formal exhibition to the world might not take place until Lady May and himself had quitted Trelingham. He could not bear to be congratulated. He knew that the work was equal to anything achieved in England of late years; and he thought it would speak for itself to those who had eyes in their heads. It was part of his strangeness that he never referred to the memorable evening of the ball at which, for the first and last time, he had danced with Hippolyta. Some allusion was necessarily made to the *tableaux vivants*, but from him it drew no response. Had he forgotten, or was he acting a part? Ivor, staying by express invitation from the Earl, who perceived that Glanville derived much benefit from his company, was convinced that the fever had passed a sponge not only over Hippolyta's name, but over the scenes wherein she had appeared. He dreaded accidental references to her, and sought occasion one day to whisper in the ear of the Earl's daughter that if she desired Rupert's continuance in the health he was enjoying, she must be careful not to mention Falside, or any one connected with it. In surprise she asked the reason. He thought it best to reply, with seeming frankness, that Glanville's attack of fever was due to an accident he had sustained near the

cottage; that during his delirium the least allusion to place or people made him much worse; and that she might notice for herself how completely he kept silence about them since he had recovered. Lady May thanked him. She remembered now that the name of Colonel Valence or his daughter had not been heard from Rupert's lips during the past months. Ivor begged her to warn Lord Trelingham. She did so, and the tacit consent was renewed which for years had banished the name of Valence from conversation at the Court.

There was considerable stir in the great world when their engagement became known. It had then existed nearly six months, and the marriage was to take place before Lent. This was a stipulation of Lord Trelingham's, to which his daughter willingly acceded, as likewise to the arrangement whereby all the glory of it was to overshadow his favourite church, St. Ethelfleda's, in Duke's Lane. The ecclesiastical ceremonies would be elaborate, and some of them, it was thought, illegal; but on these points the Earl admitted of no compromise. Rupert assented languidly. He could have wished to be married on the Continent; but if that might not be, any where was better than Trelingham. The settlements involved less delay than usual. Lady May's interest in the Earl's entailed property was slight; and her personal fortune, though smaller than it would have been in more skilful hands than her father's, was perfectly safe, and included neither land nor houses. Rupert was, if anything, the wealthier of the two. His solicitor drew up a lucid inventory of his goods and belongings; among them was Forrest House, now let at a handsome figure to a tenant who held it on a seven years' lease. Lady May observed the name; she was acquainted with the neighbourhood, and asked Rupert what sort of place Forrest House might be. He answered in very few words, telling her it had belonged to his grand-aunt, and he had not seen it since spending his holidays there when a boy. 'It must be worth a visit,' she said. 'No,' he replied absently. The conversation drifted to something else.

It was a brilliant wedding, and St. Ethelfleda's was

thronged. Ivor, invited to act as Rupert's best man, declined, alleging that he should feel absurdly out of place; and he contented himself with being a spectator. There was no lack of 'best men' among the artist's acquaintance, including that particular one of his *confrères* who had first given Lady May an account of him. The bridesmaids were, what they are always said to be on such occasions, charming; the ceremonies as elaborate as they could be made, the crowd of carriages great, the wedding-march thrilling, the wedding-breakfast artistically splendid. Rupert, as more than one of his friends observed, was grave and still. 'He is subdued before marriage,' said a cynic; 'well, as lief sune as syne; all men are subdued after it.' In returning thanks for the way they had drunk Lady May Glanville's health—she blushed at the new name—he was felicitous, as they expected, but not so bright as many had known him to be. The ceremony was over, the scene vanished. Lady May and her husband, accompanied by the Earl, whom they insisted on taking with them, went by easy stages to Florence, and travelled during the next half-year up and down Italy. Tom Davenant, before their engagement was published, had found a shooting companion and was now in the Rocky Mountains. The Earl wrote to him at San Francisco, where he was in course of time to spend a few weeks. And Ivor Mardol returned to his engravings in Grafton Place. He had broken with his society; he was watched, suspected, but otherwise let alone.

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In the old stories a year and a day was the fated period when happiness or misfortune came to an end. Will happiness last so long? Lady May would have returned to that inquiry a triumphant answer in the affirmative on the morning that she and her husband bade farewell to Florence, after a sojourn which had continued, with pleasant interruptions, some eighteen months. With her it was still the honeymoon. There had been flecks of cloud in her untroubled sky, but they did not linger; they melted quickly into the blue, leaving her the most contented wife in Christendom. Her father's delicate health was a trial, which he lightened for the married pair by a cheerful

countenance and a resignation corresponding to his inward hopes. Tom Davenant, won by the Earl's solicitations,—he could not bear to see the young man wandering over the face of the earth,—had come back from America, and was now on his way to meet them at Nice. They proposed to spend a few weeks there and in the neighbourhood, exploring, as the season grew milder, those dead cities along the coast which neither Rupert nor Lady May had seen. Afterwards they would extend their travels, according as the Earl could bear it, into Spain, as far as Valencia. They did not know exactly how their course would lie. The charm of travelling, said Glanville, is to have no plans; there is nothing like the unforeseen. Perhaps Cousin Tom would accompany them.

The inspired artist had been quiescent in our friend since his wedding-day. He studied pictures, and sharpened his powers of criticism; but he painted very seldom, sketching a scene or a head that took his fancy, working for two or three hours, and then throwing down his pencil with an air of fatigue. This was one of the flecks of cloud that rose in the heaven of his wife's content. He would be absorbed, too, in his thoughts, and not speak for a whole morning; sometimes his sleep was broken, he had bad dreams, and could not always remember where they had been staying a few days earlier. But his love was not to be doubted. Though he never went into the raptures which his eager disposition should have demanded, he was grateful and protecting, full of quiet tenderness, and never separated from her during the twenty-four hours. They did not go much into society or receive many friends; but apart from Lady May, Rupert had no amusement. Once at the reception of a Roman princess, to which Rupert had taken her chiefly to see the marbles, which were famous, they found themselves, in the crowded rooms, face to face with the Duke of Adullam. He had known Lady May in his time of innocence, and he at once accosted Glanville. The artist gave him an inquiring look, and said with embarrassment, 'Pardon me, sir. I seem to recollect your face, but I cannot tell where it was we met.' The Duke, who, as I have remarked, was admirably quick in divining

other men's thoughts, supposed that Rupert was feigning. He smiled, and murmured under his breath, 'This is needless;' then raising his voice, said pleasantly, 'We shall meet again,' and passed on. 'Who is it?' inquired the artist of Lady May. 'The Duke of Adullam,' she answered, wondering in her own mind where they could have known one another. 'I must have met him somewhere in society,' said her husband. It was the only time they met abroad.

May Glanville was jealous of her husband's fame, and, while they were at Nice expecting Tom Davenant, she began to urge him, somewhat vehemently, to resume his painting. He replied, 'I have no inspiration. The spirit has gone out of me. I could not design a fresh drawing to save my life.'—'Why not finish what you have commenced?' she said; 'there are portfolios of drawings in our room. Shall I send for them?' He was willing, but not interested. The drawings were brought down, and Lady May began to turn them over. 'This seems nearly perfect,' she said, holding the largest of them out to him. He took it in silence. It was a water-colour. 'When did I paint that?' he muttered to himself. 'May, is not this the cascade at Falside?' He seemed to be searching in his memory. 'No one could mistake it,' she answered; 'don't you remember going over several times from Trelingham to sketch there?'—'No,' he said, shaking his head; 'I often think I must have forgotten what I did that year; it is all so dim.' His wife, mindful of Ivor's warning, and terrified at the change in his expression, took the sketch and hid it away. He would not paint that morning, and they went down to the sea. After dinner he asked to look at the drawing again, but it could not be found. His mind seemed busy with it while he slept, and he awoke several times in the night with sobs choking him. Lady May was in consternation. She never urged him to paint again.

Tom Davenant's arrival gave them pleasanter occupation. He was still the wild huntsman, nor had he lost that boyish innocence which made his talk, though neither witty nor profound, so engaging. A life of adventure could not take away the ruddy and white of his countenance; the feminine beauty and the open beaming eyes had in

nothing altered. But his bearing was more manly; he dwelt a little on the social aspect of landed property, and said he should take Ivor Mardol's advice what to do about his tenants when he got back to Foxholme. He was reserved and courteous with Lady May, spent most of his time with the Earl, and seemed struck with the alteration in Glanville, whom he had never set eyes on since the coming of age. 'Brain fever must be a peculiar thing,' he remarked; 'I should not have known Glanville.'

He readily consented to accompany them on their tour. You could get riding and shooting in Spain of an uncommonly good sort; and the fishing, a man told him in America, was superb, if you knew where to look for it. They must be careful of the season, that was all. And he helped Glanville to draw out what they called a fever time-table, showing when the air was deadly to foreigners in the various provinces. Lord Trelingham, though not a rapid, was a good traveller. Rupert did not care how long the journeys took. His sole desire was not to return to England. He would have liked Ivor to join them; but Ivor was now working hard to keep himself alive and had sold his genius to a newspaper. He did not meddle with Socialism, nor had he entered a lodge since the fatal night in Denzil Lane.

They were still at Nice, when Rupert one afternoon, being too fatigued to go out on the beach, stayed in to write a letter or two, and was resting by the open window. It was a lovely winter's day, the sea tranquil, and the lights subdued and pensive, while the air came in warm gusts through the casement, which was completely framed in leaves. Glanville felt very weak; his mind, too, was distracted, he could not tell why. The letter he was writing would not get itself finished. He let his pen drop, took up a paper-knife, and began to make imaginary drawings on the desk. While he was playing idly with it, and the confused memories of the last three years were passing through his brain, a thought struck him, and he looked attentively at the desk, almost as though it were a living thing which could tell him what he wanted. 'Why do I carry this always with me?' he asked himself; 'I

know there must be a reason. Did it belong to any one?' He could not recollect. But he turned it to and fro, opened the compartments, unlocked some secret drawers, and poured out their contents on the table. They made a miscellaneous heap. 'Looking for letters,' he said musingly; 'who was it that turned over a great pile of correspondence, looking for letters? I was standing by. And there was only a candle burning. At night it was, surely. I wish I could remember.' He passed his hand through the papers; it struck against a bundle of them, which he drew out—a small packet tied carefully with riband. He undid it, and a number of letters fell on the table. At the sight of that handwriting, which he did not know, which he could not assign to the writer, a fit of trembling came over him. He sat down, and for some time would not look again. Then with an effort he turned to the signature. There was none, all the letters were unsigned. But there was a heading to each of them, and it breathed the tenderest affection; and as he passed from one to the other, astonished, overcome, pierced through and through, the floodgates of memory burst open. Tears gushed from his eyes; he laid his head, weeping, on the desk, and murmured in agony, 'Hippolyta.'

Little by little it came back, the sweet, dreadful, forgotten past. Holding her letters in his hand, putting them to his bosom like the anodyne that would still his beating heart, reading them in snatches and breaking off blinded with tears, he spent the next hour and the next piecing together his shattered life and endeavouring to make out his own story. Hippolyta was lost and he was married to Lady May. That was the sum. Fate had been too strong for them. Three years—he could not reckon, even now, whether it was three years or how long it was—since the only woman he loved had forsaken him, and he was the husband of another! A cold sweat broke out on his forehead. He felt like a dying man. 'What if the fever should return, and I forget again!' he said, shuddering from head to foot. How strange to have forgotten Hippolyta! But she had been more cruel; she remembered and was gone away. Or could she be dead? Her father thought

so; it was the last word he had spoken that night at Falside.

The sound of footsteps was heard on the gravel. May and her cousin, who had attended Lord Trelingham in his walk, were coming in. Rupert thrust back the letters into their hiding-place, and brushed past his wife at the door.

'Where are you going, dear?' she said, trying to detain him.

'For a walk,' was his answer; 'I shall not dine. Don't wait for me.' She was utterly astonished. Glanville, taking his hat, ran down the steps and away in the direction of the sea.

'Tom,' said Lady May to her cousin, 'something has happened. Rupert is not well. Follow him, please, and keep him in sight till he comes home again.'

The young man obeyed at once. He did not like the appearance of Rupert's eyes when he passed them. They were wild and dangerous. He moved on quietly, and saw that the artist was taking hasty strides up and down the beach, his head sunk in deep meditation, his arms folded in front of him. To disturb him would have been imprudent; there was nothing for it but to keep out of sight and watch till darkness came on. When night fell Rupert was still pacing over the sands. Then Tom went up to him, and with gentle decision took him by the arm and led him home. Glanville did not resist; he went in and shut himself in his room. Lady May found him lying on the bed asleep. She sat there a long time, afraid to wake him; but when he came to himself again he reprimanded her tenderly for letting him lie, dressed as he was, so many hours. 'Are you better?' she inquired, bending over him.

'As well as I ever shall be,' he replied in a tone of utter sadness. And that was all the explanation he would give of the fatal afternoon.

He left her now frequently and took solitary expeditions on foot, in which he would allow none to join him. Tom Davenant was not fitted to play the spy; he felt that Rupert, though ill and feverish, was capable of resenting surveillance, which indeed, after the first outbreak, he did not seem to need. Lady May consulted the Earl's physician privately.

He recommended that as little notice as possible should be taken, but a person set to watch Glanville when he went abroad. It was done, and nothing came of it. The artist merely went by the sea, or sat in a sheltered nook when he had got some distance from home. He appeared to be reading papers occasionally; he met no one and did himself no harm. The surveillance was given up, and Lady May, on her father's advice, urged their journey to Spain. Perhaps change of air was all Rupert required.

He required much more, but she could not have imagined it. During the next months there went on a desperate struggle between his restored memory, bringing him daily anguish, and the weakened reason which the brain fever had left him. To unburden himself of his secret might have been deliverance, but he could not speak, least of all to Lady May. He said, 'I do not love her,' when he was away by the sea and Hippolyta's letters, with their naïve and intoxicating tenderness, were spread out before him. But he came home, and the letters were hidden again, and he felt pity for the deluded wife who had been faithful in everything. He knew the romance of the picture which had first made her acquainted with his name. She told him one day at Fiesole; he did not remember Hippolyta then, and he was grateful that this high-hearted Lady May had understood and cared for him. So now he pitied, he almost loved her; but it was not the great warm sunshine of love; it was a dreamy pale reflection, leaving him chill and her dissatisfied. For she could not tell what had come over Rupert. Was there an earlier affection? They came across Madame de Lutenieff in their travels. She was the same as ever, but she remarked a change in them. She had always been a little sceptical of the artist's devotion to her cousin, though never, since the day when she refused Tom Davenant, of Lady May's attachment to him. With her old malicious lightness she sped a random arrow, as they were sitting at the late breakfast in the hotel at Burgos, where they were all staying. 'Have you heard of Miss Valence, lately?' she said to Glanville, looking across at him.

He rose hastily, and thundering out, 'Never mention that name in my hearing, you witch,' left the room.

She was mortally offended, and said to Lady May, 'I knew it was not all fancy. Take care they never meet, or you will suffer the consequences.'

May, with equal anger, declared that it was a vile calumny. Rupert had been thrown from his horse near Falside, she went on, and the concussion of the brain which ensued had almost proved fatal; that was why he could not endure the associations of the place. Karina did not believe the story. She declined to pardon Rupert; and though it cost her a pang to leave Tom Davenant, her passion for whom was more absorbing than ever, she bade them good-bye next day.

Not sorry that she was gone, the others continued to travel southwards. They saw the curious old Spanish life that still lingers on the Mediterranean shore. They visited many a gloomy or graceful cathedral. They spent as many days as its depressing climate would allow in the golden air of Valencia, and were fascinated with the limpid skies, exhilarating atmosphere, and gorgeous painted sunsets of Malaga. Thence they returned through some of the wildest and most picturesque country they had ever beheld,—green valleys, steep and rocky paths, and luxuriant vegetation, where the dark-green of the orange groves was mingled with the cane-brake,—by Velez and Alhama to the 'Last Sigh of the Moor,' and entering late, while the sun glittered on the snowy range ahead of them, beheld the enchanted Vega and Granada. It was three days' riding such as Tom Davenant had not enjoyed in his life; for he delighted in landscape, though he never spoke of it. The third day had been allowed for the sake of his cousin and her two invalids. Rupert, still fighting with madness, saw the beautiful things of their pilgrimage as in a dream. But the Sierra Nevada, with its glittering snows, made him lift his eyes to it. 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove,' he murmured in the sweet familiar words, 'and I would fly and be at rest.' They had come through Barcelona, but he had prevailed on them not to explore what sights it possessed. He could not bear anything that reminded him of Hippolyta; the remembrance that she was born in this land of the sun made it melancholy to him. But he would have been sorry to leave it were the

moment of departure at hand. Which, then, of our travellers was self-controlled enough to find due pleasure in the walks by Genil and Darro, in the endless unfolding dream of Alhambra and Alameda, with their thousand reminiscences from a dead and gone time? Not Rupert. The green Vega, the rosy-tinted snows, the silence as of eternal mourning for a past that could never be restored, the pathos, the desolation, —these spoke to his heart, soothing it a little. They went on to Cordova, built by the Moslems in their ages of faith and high fortune, when their sword carved out empire and their chisel smoothed the marble blocks into symmetry, making of them sanctuaries wherein stood the golden-fretted inscription, 'There is no conqueror but Allah.' The artist-soul began to stir in Glanville. He felt a desire to sketch these Oriental-looking houses, to visit the great mosque under changing lights, to steal its colour from the Sierra for his canvas. But a very slight excursion with Tom Davenant in the vicinity—Tom pursuing the sport which abounds here, and Rupert loitering to fill his sketch-book—convinced him that he must lay aside the pencil again and fight his ghostly enemy with other weapons. He was too weak to paint.

The spring was not much advanced when they came to Seville, which they proposed to make their resting-place till the first heats should compel them to go on. The bright city, beloved of Moor and Christian, pleased them more than all they had seen. Situate in the midst of a watered garden, sheltered to north and south by a double parapet of hills, lit up with a clear sun which makes the air transparent like glass and brings out all delicate and fervent colour, with a gay and smiling population moving in the shade of the narrow, winding streets, or basking in the warm sunshine, it might well have seemed a Paradise for the convalescent spirit, that could be cheered and strengthened only by surrendering itself to gentle influences. The nights were fresh; the air exhilarated like wine. For Rupert, the physician said, if he would not expose himself to the levante —the wind from the African deserts—there was no climate more suited. His prostration of spirits would cease; work would again be possible. Lady May devoutly hoped they

should witness a change in him for the better ere they set out travelling again. The pictures, the glories of Murillo, the Herreras, and Zurbaran that made Seville a treasury, ought to rouse his enthusiasm, his emulation. Surely he would not renounce his splendid calling? And she quoted many of his sayings in the gallery at Trelingham,—how art itself, pursued in a spirit of truth, demanded and drew forth a heroism equal to the highest. He listened, he assented, but he was cold.

Yet there came refreshment to his weary spirit, though the star of hope had set never to rise again. He was glad to have lapsed, as it were, out of the busy modern life into a realm where all that was living belonged to the past, like a vision made palpable to the sense, but remaining a vision still. The memories of those London nights did not vex him so keenly. He strolled about alone, crossed the river frequently to explore Triana, the gipsy suburb, and distract himself with the strange costumes, dilapidated, picturesque lanes, and odd-looking bits of colour which seemed quainter and more out of the world the more he studied them. His health improved. But with returning strength came a feeling of estrangement from Lady May that, conceal it as he might, would make its presence known by imperceptible channels. She was alarmed, indignant, at her wit's end. Could Rupert, so long after their marriage, be going back to the days when he cared nothing for her, when she dared not meet his eye? The thought was not to be endured. They had never indulged in lovers' quarrels; but they were sometimes near quarrelling now, and the atmosphere was charged with thunder. May Glanville was jealous. Of whom or what? Of a dead love, a memory, a regret? Suppose, after all, he had once cared for Hippolyta Valence, what did it signify? All men had such things in their lives. Was he not a devoted husband? 'Not as in those first happy months,' she answered with a sigh.

Tom Davenant was sorry that they had not stayed at Cordova, the country round which, with its pine forests and wild-wooded hollows, he preferred to the environs of Seville. But coming in after a long day's rambling, he upbraided his friends at dinner for not having paid a visit which, he

supposed, they would have undertaken at the earliest opportunity. 'In what direction?' Lady May inquired. 'Wasn't that picture in the gallery at Trelingham brought from a place, a convent or church, in these parts?' he asked in turn. 'From the convent of San Lucar,' replied his cousin, 'and the nearest town was Sepúlveda.'—'Quite so,' said Tom; 'I heard you mention the name often enough; and I fixed it in my mind by calling it Sepulchre, which it sounds like.'—'It is the name of a poet,' interposed Rupert, 'a native of Cordova, I think, whose ballads are sometimes pretty.'—'Well, I got within sight of it to-day,' said Tom, 'and I thought it looked as gloomy as any place I ever saw. But the country all about is fine. Why don't you make an expedition to the convent? You could get there by driving in three days at the outside.'

'It would be an agreeable diversion,' said the Earl. 'Do you suppose we could put up at Sepúlveda?'

'I will tell you the best way,' answered Tom. 'I came round on Sepúlveda—what a name!—by cross-roads, and I saw the convent, standing out very clear on one side of the valley, and a large white house, which I took to be a sort of *paseo*, if it was not an inn, on the other. Let us look in the guide-book. An inn at that spot would be exactly what you want. You could sleep the night there, go over your convent next morning, and come back when you pleased.'

The guide-book when produced gave little information. There was an inn where Tom Davenant had seen one, not of the very best, but fairly good. In Sepúlveda there was none to be recommended. Of the convent only this brief notice was given, that it once held the shrine of a local saint, and had shared in the general suppression. After considerable debate it was resolved that they should set out in two days, and Tom should precede them to make all ready.

At this point in my story I may as well remark that not long before the Duke of Adullam had despatched a peremptory message to Ivor Mardol, who was working as usual in his own home in Grafton Place. The laconic epistle forbade delay; a carriage was waiting which conveyed Ivor to the Duke's residence, and in a few minutes they were seated

with closed doors in his library. The conference lasted some time. When Ivor came out again his face had the strangest expression, and bore traces of violent weeping. He returned home in the carriage that brought him, sent word to his newspaper that they must find some one to take his place and consider his engagement at an end, put some few things together in the greatest agitation, and started for Paris by the night mail. This observed we may return to our friends at Seville.

They set forth in brilliant weather; and difficult as are Spanish roads, and ill-tempered as were the Spanish beasts that carried them sullenly along, it was not possible to resist the sweet influence of air and sun, the genial morning, and the prospects, which grew lovelier as they advanced. Rupert, mindful of the purpose they were fulfilling, and the associations which must be vividly present to Lady May and her father, exerted himself to bear a worthy part, and by assiduous and delicate attentions all but effaced from his own mind the feeling of estrangement which had ruled there during the past weeks. It was natural to touch on the Madonna of the Seraphim and its wonderful history; but they diverged thence to speak of a thousand things which were but distantly connected with Madonnas or with painting. The charm of Glanville's conversation, long suppressed by illness, and his anxious inward conflicts, seemed greater than ever. Lord Trelingham listened in a pleasant mood, and his daughter's eyes sparkled with delight. She did not venture to express her feelings, lest Rupert, become self-conscious, should fall back into his tone of reserve; but he saw that she was happy and it took away the sting of remorse. He knew his conduct for some time had been unjustifiable; he could not excuse or explain it. However, he would strive against the tempter. During these days he would not think of Hippolyta. While saying so to himself he let fall the conversation; he was thinking of her already, and the lovely face came to trouble and perplex him. Still, he made the effort; he found subjects which would lead them away from the Hermitage and Falside. If at eventide he seemed worn out Lady May did not suspect the reason.

Their journey during these two days took them by many a desert place and wild, where not a tree grew nor a house was to be seen, and only the lentisk and the coarsest grass would flourish. Irrigation failing, much of the garden of Andalusia has become a wilderness; the country people have retired in the train of effeminate dukes and marquises to the towns; and often when the gates are passed the traveller might fancy himself in the wastes of Africa. But overhead was the steadfast blue sky, and on the edge of the landscape rose that semicircle of lofty heights which Colonel Valence had long ago in his letter compared to the drop-scene of a theatre. The snow lay on them in great sparkling fields, which sometimes had the softness of clouds, and changed colour as the sun passed over them. Rupert spoke little this second day, but he did not seem ill at ease.

A wearisome drag up the side of the wind-swept, long-drawn ascent brought them at close of day to Sepúlveda, which, huddling on the brow and straggling over the sides of its mountain, appeared dark and grim as they drove through its unpaved streets and solitary Plaza. 'I am glad we are not staying here,' said Lady May. They came out on the other side as the bells of San Lucar were ringing the Angelus. For a while they paused. The narrow valley with the country beyond lay at their feet, the glory of sunset streaming over it. To their left, at no great distance, rose the gray-white walls of the convent, its imposing church seeming to stand in front of the other buildings, as though to protect and sanctify them. The windows glittered, and below them, but not far down, the waters of the Guadalete, broadened to a lake, shone like a blazing mirror beneath the rays of the sun, which was now on the verge of the mountains, a fiery, golden ball. The white roads ran by the convent, through garden after garden, vineyard after vineyard; and near and far the cornfields grew lusty and green, while feathered palm-trees rising close to San Lucar gave an Oriental charm to the landscape, and reminded our pilgrims that they had come to an Arabian land. There was something Moorish and fairylike over it all. They considered the way they were going. On the right Lady

May pointed out to her father, whose eyes were weak, the track which led to their inn—a large white-washed building, with the air of a deserted barracks, standing high over against the convent. For on that side the ravine was steep and much more elevated than San Lucar, serving to screen the house from the north-east wind. Small white cottages, or rather huts, were visible, looking like tiny sailing-boats, among the vineyards; and on the river side a fisherman here and there was drying his nets. Otherwise not a human being was anywhere in sight. The stillness, the absence of breathing life, added a mournful charm. 'The landscape has fallen asleep,' said Rupert.

Very slowly, for their beasts were tired, they made the circuit of the road, now up, now down, until they arrived at La Fonda d'Oro. Tom Davenant met them on the way. He had made everything as comfortable as might be. The host, a travelled and well-educated Andalusian, full of kindness and courtesy, received them with much warmth, addressing them in a few words of very broken English to show that he knew their national habits. He was a Liberal, had lived some months an exile in London, and would probably join in the next pronunciamento on behalf of the Republic. But happily he could not talk politics with Lord Trelingham, whose mastery over foreign languages had never been great. The rooms were large and cool, with little furniture and unpapered walls, but the most extensive views over the valley and beyond. There were no other guests. Tom Davenant had caught some trout in the river below, their wine they had brought from Seville, and when dinner was served in the immense dining-room, whose windows seemed to join the sheet of silver water outside, they were feeling more intimate and at home with one another than had been their fortune since Rupert's memory was restored to him.

They resolved on spending the morrow in going over church and convent. The host, in reply to their inquiries, said they had better cross in the boat. It was shorter than going back to the bridge near Sepúlveda. But there was nothing to see, in his opinion. The church had lost its treasures; the convent, he added between his teeth, had

been given by the clericals who now ruled Spain to some fresh order of nuns, he could not say whether black, white, or gray,—they were nuns, that was enough,—who had got it through the Queen's confessor three or four years ago. They were not the old set, he knew, but they were nuns.

Lady May, who followed his Spanish more easily than the others, interpreted to her husband, hoping it would amuse him. The Earl retired, and Tom Davenant went to make friends with the ostlers, including the zagal or boy who had run with the horses from Seville, and to smoke endless *puros* in true Spanish fashion, to the increase of their good fellowship—for he gave away as many as he smoked.

Rupert and his wife, when they went upstairs, were drawn to the window by the splendid moonlight which flooded the valley. They stood a long while looking out, in silence. The palms rose dark against the sky; vineyards and cornfields had put off their bright green. The lake was a sheet of silver, on which the reeds, trembling as the wind took them, cast wavering shadows. San Lucar, with its many roofs and massive sanctuary, was wrapt in slumber, and the moonbeams glorified it like a pavilion whose curtains were drawn, and its inhabitants spellbound, as in the thousand and one nights of Scheherezade. The stillness was deeper, if possible, than in the day. Leaning her head on Rupert's shoulder, the lady said at last, 'This makes you happy, does it not, my artist?'—'Happy?' he replied. 'Ah yes, but not for to-morrow. Life's a dream.'

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CRY FROM OFF THE WATERS

THE Andalusian air is pleasant in the early morning, and our travellers were stirring betimes. It was their intention to cross the lake immediately after breakfast, but a slight incident had almost put off their expedition. Lord Trelingham, fatigued with his three days' journey in a rough vehicle, and perhaps feeling the languor which in warm climates assails those who come to the hills from the city, was unequal to the many hours' exploration which might be in store for visitors to the convent. He required a day's rest. To go without him seemed uninviting, for his interest in the sanctuary and his antiquarian knowledge would have lit up the past they were to study, and a true picture of which they desired to take with them from San Lucar. But he would not have them delay on his account. Tom Davenant would bear him company; Rupert and Lady May promised to return for luncheon when they had visited the church, leaving the convent for a later inspection; and thus it was arranged. The Earl saw his daughter and son-in-law embark; they declined the services of a boatman, Lady May steering and Glanville taking the oars. They carried a sail, which they thought of unfurling on the homeward voyage. A more lovely morning, clear, bright, and breezy, could not have been wished. The waters flashed from the blade and fell away in diamond streamers as they moved along; the reeds shivered delicately and half-bent into the wavelets which the boat was making; in a neighbouring cover the music of sweet-throated song-birds was audible, and nearer and

nearer came the gray old convent, tranquil as in the moonlight, sacred, melancholy, peaceful. 'I will sketch this by and by,' said Rupert.

They touched the gravel, landed, and made their boat fast. Not a soul met them as they went up 'the way of the partridges,' as the Spaniards call a track that can hardly be seen and is wide enough only for a bird's foot. It led through low brushwood, not far, and they found themselves on the broad, dusty terrace which they had observed the evening before, from Sepúlveda, running like a white thread round the convent. Turning to the left and going forward a few steps they reached the wooden gates which had been erected instead of those battered down, forty years ago, by the wild gipsy and his companions that day they sacked the cloister. No fear of violence seemed to be felt now within those walls. The gates were open, so too were the doors of the church. They passed in and could hardly see at first, the roof was so low and the gloom so intense.

It was an exceedingly ancient edifice, which had been first Gothic, then Moorish, and then Christian again in the course of its thousand years. Built, as it now stood, chiefly under Moslem influence, it was a confused but not unpicturesque combination of the mosque and the basilica, ending in a chancel of the Early Pointed style whose lancet windows almost touched one another. Thus, on entering, it appeared a forest of low pillars where darkness dwelt, with a large and pure radiance in the sanctuary. There were many side-chapels, now bare of gates and altars, with narrow round-headed windows, hardly admitting the light of day. A lamp, burning feebly, denoted where the shrine of San Lucar once had existed; but its marbles, precious offerings, and pictures encrusted with gold, were no more to be seen. There was a priest saying mass at the tawdry altar, with only the boy kneeling behind him for a congregation. The nave was vast and desolate. Fragments of gilded work remained where the hands of the despoilers could not reach them; and the curious motley architecture, stained with the dust of ages, with the smoke of tapers borne in procession, and the burning of a hundred lamps day and night, resembled in its intricacy and mellowness the work

of Nature rather than of man. It was all matted together, so to speak; one style ran into the next, and a sudden turn revealed the old embedded in the new like a fossil. The grandeur, the solemn abandonment, the petrified life, had a vast and penetrating effect which could neither be defined nor resisted. Man had erected this magnificent pile, yet it spoke not so much of man or his works as of the unknown influence that subdues and takes possession of them while the ages flow on. The artist's pride was brought down, his glory annihilated, and another spirit seemed to be brooding over the creation which had once been his. Time, the irresistible; Change, the magician; and the world's judgment as men hasten upon other paths,—these had emptied the holy place, and made it a desolation, while lifting it up into the serene air of eternity.

They spent a long hour in going from chapel to chapel, not always seeing what was before them, nor talking of it, but exchanging, as seldom hitherto, their thoughts on the manifold ideals which have gleamed as out of a cloud upon human-kind, and, shedding momentary light, have vanished again. At intervals they heard the sound of a bell, denoting that mass was going on at the various altars; they made way more than once for a priest who moved by them across the nave, in vestment and alb, carrying the chalice. They could hear faintly when a great door was opened or shut in the convent itself; and by degrees they came through the forest of pillars to the Trascoro, with its railing of wood instead of the bronze gates that had been torn away, and its white walls on which neither painting nor ornament was visible. No Madonna of the Seraphim hung above the high altar; saints and angels had spread their lustrous wings and were fled. The pictured glass had been struck into fragments by Colonel Valence's soldiery, and was now replaced by the commonest sort, into which a shred or two of colour, still flamboyant, had been introduced, as a reminiscence of that which could never be restored. It was a comfortless chancel, not inviting to pray; and the light, though pure, seemed too large.

Naturally they paused a long while in front of the altar.

'Here,' said Rupert, 'your face was visible for two hundred years, as in the clouds of heaven. Were one of the old sisters to come alive now and see you, she would fancy the Madonna of the Seraphim had descended from the wall.' As he spoke, and while he went on to explain the peculiarities of the style, he raised his voice occasionally, for nothing tires so much as a whispered conversation. From time to time he turned to look down the church. At the great door a flood of morning light poured in.

The nave was still empty; but kneeling to his left, not far from the altar-rails, in the shadow of clustering columns, was a figure draped in black from head to foot, whose attention had been caught by the voice of the stranger, and whose face, bordered by a long white veil, was now fixed upon his with overpowering astonishment. He returned the look for a full half minute in complete stupor. Lady May was examining the chancel, and her face was turned from him. 'Good God,' he said, grasping her arm, 'who is that?'

'Who?' said Lady May, turning round. The colour was gone out of his cheeks; he stood bewildered. Ere he could recover, and while Lady May was still uncertain of his meaning, the black-draped figure rose hastily and disappeared round the column. They heard swift steps, the sound of an opening door, and its recoil upon its hinges again.

Glanville without a moment's pause, when he saw the figure retreating, followed it. He ran to the first door in the side-aisle, pulled it violently open, and beheld the unknown woman moving fast along the narrow passage in which he was now alone with her. There was a turning, and the steps fled round it; still Rupert followed. A number of cells lined the passage on both sides, and a large door at the end standing open showed the lake and the distant side of the valley. It was impossible the nun should escape him. She reached the last cell,—it was a guest-room or parlour,—entered it, and stood palpitating with frantic terror as Glanville rushed in, and falling at her feet, clasping her robe, kissing the hands she would fain have withheld from him, cried, like a man out of himself, 'Hippolyta, Hip-

polyta, have I found you? In mercy speak. Tell me I am not mad.'

'You are not mad,' said the nun faintly; 'I am Hippolyta.'

It was no other. Lost so long, vanished so suddenly, she was found in a moment, thus. He sank speechless to the ground. He did not swoon. His eyes, like those of a wounded animal, looked up at her. After a minute and more, when he could speak, he said pityingly, breathlessly, 'What has become of your golden hair? It was so beautiful. Why do you hide it under that veil?' He seemed to think of nothing else but this.

'I have cut it off,' the nun replied in a low voice.

When he heard the words, tears came into his eyes. 'I saw a woman in the hospital that they told me had golden hair,' he murmured, 'when I was looking for you the first night; but they had never seen yours, Hippolyta, or they would not have said so. The woman came back when I was ill, when I had brain fever. She was dead then, I think. Her name was Annie Dauris. Her hair was not like yours, Hippolyta. Why did you cut it off? Are you a nun?' He spoke, hardly knowing what he said, in low uncertain tones.

'Oh, must I suffer this again!' cried Hippolyta in agony, her eyes streaming. 'Rupert, Rupert, be a man. I have left you, I am nothing to you. Are you not married?'

'Yes,' he answered simply. 'Would you believe it, darling, that I forgot even your name when I was ill?' He went on, pausing at every two or three words, and shaking with passion, 'I didn't remember that I had seen you till one day, one winter's afternoon, when I found your letters, and it all came back. Why did you leave me? Was I unkind to you? I never meant to be. It made me ill for a long while; it made me forget everything. I married—you know who it is, you were friends once—May Davenant.' It was pitiful to hear him—reason seemed to be tottering on its throne; and the accents were those of a trembling, penitent child, asking pardon for a fault it has committed unwittingly. Hippolyta's distress grew with every word. She implored him to rise. He did so, and

stood a little way off, facing her. 'Why did you go?' he repeated, beseeching her with a mute gesture not to be angry. She wrung her hands.

'Because it was wrong from the beginning,' she exclaimed; 'because I sinned and made you to sin; because He spoke to me from the Cross and chided me, and my heart broke. I could not, I could not, Rupert, stay with you when I was so guilty. I went because the sound was in my ears of lost souls, and polluted children, and murdered maidens. I was worse than all; I had believed in sin, dedicated myself to sin; how could I face you when the light broke on me and I saw myself—stained, stained? Oh, I went. I would have thrown myself into the fire if it might cleanse me.'

'You were never stained,' he said, his eyes flaming with wrath and love; 'you were my own Hippolyta. I loved you. Did you love me?'

'Ah, Rupert,' she said, weeping.

He was subdued at the sound of her voice. 'Never mind, never mind,' he went on more composedly, and as beginning to control himself. 'But I would have married you—I told you so at the beginning—when you pleased. It was only to say the word.'

'There was no marriage for me,' she answered; 'the past could never be undone. I sinned with Magdalene. I must do penance with Magdalene.'

'And you would not marry me?' said Rupert, trying to understand, but his mind all abroad, unhinged by the shock, and not yet comprehending how the woman he loved could be standing there in the nun's dark raiment.

Hippolyta answered, 'I had fallen below marriage. My sin spoilt our affection; it took away its sacredness. It made me unfit to be any man's wife.'

'Who taught you it was a sin?' he inquired. But his looks were fastened on her face, and he was thinking how the soft brown eyes glowed above the paleness of the cheeks and the crimson lips. Hippolyta had always been pale. The white linen deadened her countenance. Why did she wear it? She had begun to answer the other

question which he had forgotten while he was thinking over this.

'Look who taught me,' she said, putting a hand on the crucifix she wore at her girdle.

Rupert glanced towards it, and shuddered. 'I do not like that symbol to be everywhere,' he said pettishly; 'Spain is covered with it. You ought to have stayed in England.'

'I made it my book before I left England,' she replied. 'Will you hear my story, Rupert? It will reconcile you to our separation—if you ever loved me,' she went on hastily, for the dangerous light was in his eyes again.

'Must we separate because I love you?' he cried. 'Hippolyta, be merciful. I have suffered—so much,' his voice sinking; 'not pain only and fever, but madness, despair, a gnawing at the heart that will not, will not leave me.'

She broke down at the sight of his grief. Pressing the crucifix to her bosom, as though to gain strength from it, after a while she had so far recovered that she made him listen. Briefly, pathetically, she told her experience in the depths of London, her consternation at the flight of Annie Dauris, her chance hearing of the sermon in St. Cyprian's, and the night that followed. 'How could I be the same to you?' she went on, while he stood in amaze, not taking in her thought, but afraid that she might be obstinate after all. 'How to meet you next morning? I cast myself on the mercy of God, whom I did not know, who was hidden, yet had sent this message to me. I had but an hour to decide. When the light came, in the gray cheerless dusk, I wrote—oh, they were hard words; I made them so. I wanted you to despise, not to search for me. I made them hard.'

'They almost killed me,' said Rupert; 'do not be afraid, they were cruel enough. Look at them.' And from his breast he drew the wedding-ring with the scrap of writing twisted round it. 'I have always carried them since the day at Nice,' he continued. 'They are poison, the antidote to lesser grief.'

Hippolyta took the ring out of his hand. 'How can you be so harsh to yourself, Rupert?' she said gently. 'Let this be the end.'

'It shall be,' he replied. There was silence between them. Hippolyta was about to continue when a knock was heard at the half-open door. A lay-sister entered. She did not look at the strange visitor, but said in Spanish:

'There are two gentlemen, foreigners, inquiring for you, sister. They say they are from England.'

'Two strangers, did you say?' inquired Hippolyta, in surprise and with quivering lips. 'Who can they be? One I might have expected.' Then, after a pause, she said to the lay-sister, 'Take them to the other guest-room and say I will come. Ask them to wait a little.' The other departed, leaving the door, according to conventual rule, half-open, as she found it. 'I thought I heard some one,' continued Hippolyta to herself; 'it must have been the lay-sister moving about. Why did she not come in immediately?'

But she was mistaken. It was not the lay-sister. In this terrible drama there was a third, unseen, but no less affected and overcome than the two that stood fronting one another with the narrow convent cell for their stage, and the lovely prospect shining unregarded before them through the window. When Rupert left the church in pursuit of the flying figure, Lady May, unable to account for his hasty movement, waited, thinking he would return. But on hearing the door shut behind him, she became vaguely alarmed, always dreading, as she did, some access of the delirium which he seemed incapable of shaking off. She followed, therefore, but the door at which she arrived resisted her efforts. It had caught and she spent some time in getting it open, and in entering the long passage leading into the public portion of the convent where strangers might pass through. But she saw no one. Whither had Rupert gone? While she was wondering she heard the sound of voices, mingled, as she fancied, with sobbing, in a room on the right. She hearkened, holding her breath. Yes, Rupert was there; he was speaking. She crept along, paused on this side of the door, looked through the long slit between its hinges, and saw her husband at Hippolyta's feet. Neither veil nor habit deluded her for an instant. She saw the countenance, she knew the voice; but she remained perfectly

still. Her blood was boiling in her veins, her brain was on fire. 'This, this,' she said to herself, 'is the secret; this explains all.' She listened as for very life. She heard everything. She saw Rupert's changing expression and Hippolyta's distress. She watched while the ring was taken back. At the same moment she heard a step coming down the cloister. What was to be done? Fortunately, the great door leading out on the terrace had been flung back against the wall, making a large angle with it, on the other side of which, in the darkness, a person might be hidden. Quick and noiseless she darted past the door of the cell, and was crouching behind the portal when the lay-sister arrived. It was the rustle of her dress in passing which had caught Hippolyta's ear. In her new position she was quite safe; and though unable to look into the cell, she could hear what was spoken.

Hippolyta continued her narrative, to which Rupert lent a more attentive ear, while Lady May caught and dwelt upon every word of it. There had been much said that to her was incomprehensible. She did not know when or where Hippolyta and Rupert could have been together. Was it for months or weeks? At Falside or in London? Impossible to guess from the story. But that signified nothing. Colonel Valence's daughter had fallen; she confessed it; and Rupert was the man to whom she had sacrificed reputation and virtue. What was this incredible story of leaving him? She strained her ears to listen.

'I wrote those words as an everlasting farewell,' said her poor rival, not aware to whom she was confessing; 'and I put them in the blotting-book, and crept downstairs and out by the front door. No one saw me. The street was empty. There was only one place in which I could take shelter. I thought they would receive me at the convent, if I told them—if I might speak again to the priest whose sermon I had heard. It was but a little way, and I kept in the shadow of the houses; and then the morning was dark, and I came to the convent door without being noticed, and I stood there awhile, not daring to ring. But there was no time to consider. I rang twice and thrice;

nobody came. Oh, it was a terrible moment; yet I could think of nothing except that perhaps they would not open. Rupert, if the grave had been my only refuge, I had no power to go back.'

'Don't torture me,' he said abruptly; 'do you think I am adamant?'

'Don't be angry,' she besought him, her tears falling afresh; 'oh, how happy we might have been but for my wickedness!'

'We shall be happy yet,' he muttered, more to himself than to her.

She gazed at him doubtfully. But he must hear the rest; it would bring him to the right conclusion. She took up the story again: 'At last,' she said, 'I could hear footsteps as of several passing along, and I rang loudly. This time the door opened. The sisters were coming from an early mass in their own chapel. I stood inside near the door waiting till they had passed. The portress, I could see, was startled at my appearance. I did not know what to say. But I told her that I wanted to see the Mother; that I was in great trouble; I persuaded her to take my message. Oh, what a morning it was! The Mother came; I went into a private room with her, and she was good and compassionate, and I confessed everything. She pitied, she did not despise me, as I thought she would.'

Glanville seemed to be listening while Hippolyta went on. He let her finish without interrupting. He had something in his mind. Her own agitation was outwardly much greater than his. She spoke of seeing the preacher, and of finding him to be like herself, Spanish, though long resident in London; she told how she had repeated her confession to him, and asked whether she might remain in the convent, and how consent was given, though not easily, for it was against the rule; and how she stayed there several months and came afterwards to San Lucar. But there were many things about herself which Hippolyta could not have told, for she did not suspect them. The story of her repentance was better known to others. And it was exceedingly strange.

At one stroke Hippolyta Valence, from the high-spirited woman she had been, attached with the most passionate intensity to Rupert, whom she regarded as more than a husband, was changed to a humble, conscience-stricken penitent, whose sole thought was expiation of the past. She left Forrest House, as the medieval saints had fled out of the world, her sin burning the road under her feet, darkening the sky, overwhelming her with fear and loathing. She said truly that rather than return and face her lover she would have leapt into the grave. From that moment Rupert Glanville was to her simply a dreadful memory, and a name which did not pass her lips. With the new faith, to which she had turned as her sole refuge, she had only an abstract and vague acquaintance which counted for nothing in the life on which she had now determined to enter. She came to it like a little child. The word expiation, which had been so frequently on Ivor Mardol's lips, rang in her ears as the only gospel. How was she to realise it? They put Christian books into her hands, and she found therein a language that expressed the abasement, the contrition, the hope which now made the very essence of her being. But it was not enough. To pray was not to work. She went after a few days to the Spanish preacher again, and said timidly that there must be some place—she had heard of such—where women like herself were admitted. Might she go there, and labour with and for them? He was astonished and greatly moved. Could he explain to her that the fallen sisterhood was made up chiefly of the ignorant, untaught, rough-mannered women, the outcasts of society, on whom she had been expending pity in the dens of the Ratcliffe Highway? She would be like a rare exotic among weeds. But she entreated so earnestly, it was hard to say no. The head of the convent, Mother Juliana, was consulted. She answered like Father Laurence, that it was not to be thought of; and Hippolyta, meekly submitting, wasted and fell into a dangerous illness, which lasted several months. She could not leave her room even to walk in the convent garden; and while the search for her continued all over London, she remained in a dying condition not a quarter of a mile from Forrest House.

She never lost consciousness during that long prostration. When Mother Juliana inquired whether she would allow Rupert to be informed that she was living, her answer was at once in the negative. Did he know where she was he would not rest until he had brought her back. And for the like reason she would not write to her father. What more appalling shock for him than to learn that his child, brought up far from Christianity and the creed of repentance, was now of her own free will imprisoned within convent walls? He had pulled down so many shrines, thrown open cloister after cloister in Southern Spain, apparently that Nemesis might overtake him in its least endurable form. The daughter of an iconoclast become a nun! Strongly as he believed in the freedom of the individual to choose his way of life, it was not to be thought of that he would acquiesce in Hippolyta's voluntary dedication of herself to asceticism. But she had the tremendous courage of her creed. She would go to the full extent of that text which speaks of renouncing father and mother, house and home, to follow the steps of Christ. She gave up once and for all those whom she loved best; it was a part of the expiation she had resolved on after sinning so deeply. To fast and do rough work with delicate hands, to give the hours of sleep to prayer and weeping, to entreat as a favour that the most abject offices of the community might be assigned to her, to keep silence, and be alone, and think no more of the interests which had filled her life—all this was nothing compared with the nailing of her love to the Cross, and surrendering her father and Rupert. She drove the nails in with unfaltering stroke, while her heart seemed to bleed its last drops. That she could not kneel in humble service at the feet of her outcast sisters, fretted her only because it seemed a denial of the bitter cup which she had been commanded from the Cross to drain. She sickened under it. In that bitterness she hoped to find strength and courage.

'No,' said Hippolyta; 'I asked them to let me work in London, but they refused. I wanted to be a lay-sister at the convent, and that, too, they said was unfit for me. I had been with them nearly a year when Father

Laurence came to me, and proposed I should join the new order of which this is the noviciate. It has been founded to help towards the elevation and conversion of women in the East—a work that can be attempted only by women. It is an active order, not cloistered. I was glad to come, though it has made my penance more dreadful to be at San Lucar, reminded always of the past. But in a few months I shall sail for India. I am professed and acquainted with my new duties.'

'Does Colonel Valence know?' asked Rupert, always in the same abstracted voice.

'He will soon, I think,' she answered cheerfully. It was a good sign that he asked questions, and did not return to what she feared. 'When I knew that I was to leave Europe I sent him a message through his old friend, the Duke of Adullam, telling him where I was and what I thought of doing. There was no danger in that, now you are married,' she concluded, faltering.

'None,' said Glanville briefly. His eyes sought the ground; he was still intent on something which he did not express. After a pause he lifted his head, drew a step nearer, and said in a low tone, 'You have explained all, darling, and there is nothing to forgive. When shall we return to England?'

She misunderstood him. 'If Lady May is with you,' she replied, 'it might be well for you to go immediately. She ought not to guess at what has passed; and to meet would be too painful. I do not think I could bear it.'

'Who was talking of Lady May?' he returned; 'I meant you and me, Hippolyta. We have met; I know what you have been doing away from me; and it is all as it should be. We shall never part again.'

The listener, so many times torn with anguish during Hippolyta's narrative, was sick unto death. But she must endure a little longer. The nun, the fallen woman, was speaking—oh, how tender she could be! Yes, she called him Rupert, in spite of her self-chosen penances.

'Dear Rupert,' Hippolyta was saying, 'do not be unmanly. Your duty is clear. Mine is not less so. Don't you understand that I have taken a vow?'

'Yes,' he exclaimed; 'you took one to me in the studio. That goes before any other; it annuls the rest, if there were a thousand. You have broken it; but I forgive you, darling, I forgive you.' His voice sank. Had he taken her hand or knelt to her? The listening woman dared not move, though she would have given worlds to see with her own eyes the degradation into which both of them were falling.

'The vow you talk of was a sin; it left us free to part when we chose,' Hippolyta replied; 'it did not make us man and wife. You are married to another.'

'What marriage?' he said with a ring of desperation in his voice; 'it is no marriage. Did I not tell you that the fever destroyed my memory, that I could not recall your name, or your features, or any scene in which you had taken part? For nearly two years Hippolyta was to me as though she had never existed. It was during that time I married Lady May. How could I have done so had I remembered you?' The accents of the speaker were high and piercing. They filled the room with their echo.

'He never loved me,' said Lady May in a dull whisper. She left her hiding-place and went slowly and noiselessly out on the terrace, then moved with unequal but hasty steps along the narrow track by which Rupert and herself had come up. It lay out of sight of the cell-window, a high, narrow grating, through which the lake was visible, as I have said, only in the farther distance.

Glanville, utterly oblivious that he had left Lady May in the church, continued to plead his cause with passionate vehemence, while Hippolyta, though not to be moved, became every moment more wretched. 'Ah,' she said at last, as her tears fell, 'if I sinned, if I was self-willed and cruel when I came to you in the studio, I am suffering for it now. Think, Rupert, think what you are asking. Am I to break the vow I have made? Are you to forsake your wife?'

'I have no wife but you,' he cried wildly. He had no sooner uttered the words than they heard a woman's scream from the water, echoed by confused exclamations and the rush of feet on the terrace. 'What is it?' said Hippolyta,

running out, followed by Glanville. A dreadful sight met their gaze. The boat in which Rupert had come was floating in the middle of the lake, apparently adrift; and in the water they saw a form rising to the surface, which, with cries of horror, they both recognised as Lady May. Her face, turned towards them, was distinctly visible. Then it disappeared in the depths. As it did so, a second figure which they had seen running to the lake-side leaped in, and swam rapidly to the place where the body had gone down. Hippolyta and Rupert, out of themselves with anguish, ran headlong through the low underwood and arrived on the bank just as the stranger who had plunged in turned round towards the shore, keeping himself afloat as well as he could while holding the inanimate form of May Glanville. Others came running at the same time, fishermen from the upper stream, men and women from the church and the convent. The disaster had been viewed from all sides; it could not have been in a more conspicuous part of the river or the valley. But assistance had come apparently too late. The young man who had rescued Lady May was seen to pause ere he reached the bank, exhausted; he gave a faint cry; and rescued and rescuer sank into the waters again. Several of the fishermen leaped in bravely, and between them brought the bodies to land, clinging in a close embrace. But there seemed no life in either. It was a moment of awful confusion. For hardly were they laid on the sand than an old man who had been standing by motionless, watching all, but unable to stir from his place, rushed suddenly forward, and flinging his arms round the young man's body, fainted. Rupert drew near, gave one startled glance, uttered an exclamation, and would have led Hippolyta away. 'No, no,' she said; 'this is my place. Who are they?'—'Look,' he said in a terrified whisper. She bent over the old man. It was Colonel Valence. He held Ivor Mardol in his arms.

Then it was that Hippolyta's heroic nature showed itself. She did not fall or faint; but while those around stood frightened and bewildered, she took Rupert by the arm, and said to him, 'Now be a man and help me. The

thunderbolt has fallen.' Unlocking Lady May's arms from the neck of the unhappy Ivor, whom she had dragged down with her into the depths, she and Rupert between them lifted her from the ground and put her gently into the arms of the rough fishermen, who carried their sad burden, lifeless as it still appeared, through the door from which a short while ago she had issued in her madness, to the cell where the fatal conversation had taken place. The nuns came about her. A bed was hastily strewn on the floor, and all possible efforts were made to restore the spirit which had seemingly fled.

Ivor lay on the sand, his eyes closed and his limbs motionless, but a faint pulsation could be detected when Rupert put his hand to his heart. 'He is not dead,' said he, bursting into tears. Colonel Valence was some time in coming to himself; nor was it without difficulty that his arms could be disentangled from the embrace in which he clasped Ivor Mardol. Till that was done there was no moving them. Hippolyta knelt by her father and put a cordial to his lips. He drew a deep breath, as if awaking from a sleep, opened his eyes, looked round, and did not seem to know any one. 'Is my son drowned?' he said in a stifled, unnatural tone. 'Ivor is by your side,' whispered Hippolyta. She was too much intent on recovering him from his swoon to notice what he had said. Colonel Valence rose, took Ivor once more into his arms, and turned towards the house. No one could hinder him. Walking steadily under the corpse-like weight, he went up through the brushwood and did not pause till he reached the terrace, Hippolyta and the rest following. 'Where can I lay him down?' he said, always in the same unnatural voice. Don Ramiro, the nuns' chaplain, who had been a witness of the disaster and was standing by, answered, 'In my room; let me help you to carry him.' Colonel Valence would have put him aside; but in trying to do so, he staggered and almost fell. The priest silently insisted; and they moved to one of the farther doors, then along a broad passage and up a flight of stone-steps, bearing Ivor as best they could, and still followed by the others. When he was stretched with face downwards on the large writing-

table which was standing near the window, a shudder ran through him; the water poured out of his mouth and nostrils, and he put a hand to his side as if in pain. His clothes were torn and muddy; there was blood on them. But when Rupert and the priest stripped him, they could find no external injury. His hands had come in contact with some jagged stones at the bottom of the lake and were bleeding. He seemed in great agony. The chaplain expressed his fears that the hurt was internal. They must send immediately to Sepúlveda for the only doctor at hand. Rupert prayed him to do so, and one of the men set off on horseback. Colonel Valence had never quitted the room; he did not speak, or offer to help Don Ramiro. He could have done nothing to the purpose. Silent and motionless, he sat holding Ivor's hand. Hippolyta, as soon as she had seen the young man taken to the chaplain's room, had returned to Lady May, without speaking a word to her father. It would almost seem that they had not recognised one another.

While they were running to and fro in the convent, distracted by the suddenness of the accident, not knowing which needed the more instant attention, Ivor or Lady May, and vainly conjecturing the cause of the disaster, a second boat was perceived crossing the lake. All the horror of that morning was not yet known to Hippolyta. As she moved about the inanimate form of Lady May, suggesting one appliance after another, and dreading that all might fail, she was accosted by a sister who begged her in God's name to go out and comfort the father of the dying woman, now standing at the door. Hippolyta was overwhelmed. She went out hastily, and found Lord Trelingham and Tom Davenant, the former endeavouring to force his way in, while the latter, with distress painted on his countenance, strove to keep him back. 'She is dead—she is dead, I know,' said the Earl piteously; 'but let me see her. I implore you to let me see her.' Hippolyta spoke to him. 'She is not dead, and she shall not die,' said Colonel Valence's daughter. Lord Trelingham seemed to know the voice, but he did not remember to whom it belonged. 'If she is living, I can wait,' he

answered simply, and leaned against the door as if meaning to stay there till they suffered him to enter. Tom Davenant explored with his eyes the countenance of the sister.

'Are you Miss Valence?' he said under his breath. 'Yes, yes,' she replied impatiently. 'But take Lord Trelingham away, see, into that other room. Make him sit down till I come again.' The Earl moaned. 'I saw it from the hotel,' he said feebly; 'she slipped from the prow of the boat into the water. It was an accident, was it not? Tell me it was an accident. Tell me she is not dead. But oh, it was so strange to see her fall over the edge of the boat and no one near. Where was Rupert?'

'Do take him away, dear Mr. Davenant,' said Hippolyta in great anxiety; 'if his daughter should hear the voice, it may kill her. I will come again the moment she is restored.' And Tom, with much gentle persuasion, induced him to pass into the vacant room opposite and to rest there. What the Earl had witnessed was, to a man of his devout religious temperament, more shocking than death. He had seen Lady May throw up her arms wildly, and deliberately put her foot over the side, slipping into the waters while the boat drifted away from her. It was not an accident he saw; he could not hide from himself the horrible truth. His daughter had attempted suicide. At once he sought for a boat, he called Tom Davenant; the delay was heart-rending, but he controlled his nerves till they had traversed the lake and reached the convent door. Hippolyta's words gave him a faint hope. But he wept agonising tears while waiting for the moment when he should look on his child again. He listened intently; the long minutes grew to an hour, and no sound of her voice had broken the silence.

Hippolyta had said, 'She shall live;' and if a miracle of devotion, prayer, and loving attention were required to save Lady May, it was not wanting. When Colonel Valence could be safely left with Ivor, and in the care of the chaplain, Rupert, whose fever of the morning was upon him yet, came down to the cell where his wife was lying. Hippolyta noticed his look, was alarmed at the effect it might produce on Lady May, and persuaded him to join Lord Trelingham. The two men met in silence. Of

the events which had preceded his daughter's attempt at self-murder the Earl knew nothing, and Rupert had nothing to say. In his brain the scenes which had followed one another with bewildering rapidity were a phantasmagoria, in which he could distinguish neither persons nor motives. He knew that he had found Hippolyta, that Ivor Mardol was not dead. He felt towards Lady May like a stranger, but was dimly aware that she had been his wife, and that he must not leave the place where she lay unconscious. Only that thought prevented him from returning to Ivor. He did not feel grief or remorse at what had happened. His brain was incapable of reflection; his heart was sated with emotion and could take in no more.

They were sitting thus, without a word, when Lord Trelingham started up. He seemed to hear the sound of his daughter's voice in the next room, and ran to the door. Tom Davenant drew him back, saying, 'Wait for Miss Valence; she said she would come.'

'Where is Miss Valence?' inquired the Earl absently; 'I have not seen her.'

'It was she that spoke to us,' answered Tom, 'the sister. She will come. Be patient.' After some time he heard the door of the guest-room opening. Hippolyta was coming out.

Lord Trelingham's ear had not deceived him. Thanks to the repeated efforts of Hippolyta and the nuns, Lady May had given signs of returning life. She was of a death-like paleness, and her limbs were at first rigid as those of a corpse. But there still was life in her wounded heart; and little by little it came back with the colour on her lips and with the trembling in hands and feet. Her eyelids unclosed, and the first object on which her glance fell was the last she had distinctly beheld, Hippolyta Valence, in the dark weeds of a nun, her face framed about with white linen, and her eyes full of light. Lady May turned from her. 'Oh, the horrible vision!' she said. Hippolyta moved on one side, and the eyes of the drowned woman opened again. 'Is it gone?' she asked in fearful accents; 'I thought it might be there still and haunt me for ever. They say hell is made of such

visions; they come in fire, and will not depart. Merciful God, grant me another hell than that. The fire I will endure, I will not complain. I have deserved it. Only do not let the vision come back.' It was the sharpest stroke Hippolyta had suffered, even on that day of suffering. May looked straight before her, quite still, as though she feared to bring the vision again by turning to the right or the left. And the penitent, heart-broken Hippolyta knelt in the shadow of the wall, and murmured with broken voice, 'Lady May, forgive me. As you hope to be forgiven, do not speak those frightful words again.'

'Are you still there?' replied the other, putting her hands, which she could hardly lift, to her eyes. 'Are we both in hell—you for being a harlot, and I for killing myself? I should be happy if I thought the fire had got hold of you. I hate you, Hippolyta Valence. I ought to have killed you first.'

That was the voice Lord Trelingham had heard, his daughter cursing the woman that, as she said, had stolen Rupert's love. Well for the unhappy father that the walls were thick and Tom Davenant held him when he would have made his way to her. Hippolyta dared not stay in the cell. Such agitation would cost Lady May her life. She was not far from the door. She glided out and came to the old man. 'Your daughter has recovered from her swoon, but she is wandering,' said the nun, taking no heed of Rupert. 'If you would sit by her bedside it might calm her.' Lord Trelingham pressed her hand gratefully and replied, 'You are Lady May's saviour.'—'Ah no,' said Hippolyta, her glance sinking; I have saved nobody.' Rupert drew near. 'Will you always malign yourself?' he cried sharply. They were the first words he had spoken in the Earl's hearing. He did not offer to accompany Lord Trelingham. When he was gone to his daughter, Tom Davenant, looking compassionately on the artist, said to him, 'Is there anything I can do for you, Glanville?' 'Try to save Ivor,' was the reply, which bewildered Davenant, who had seen nothing, and did not know who had rescued his cousin. He thought Glanville must be out of his mind. He sought an explanation from Hippolyta,

who could hardly speak for crying. But when he learnt that Ivor was in the chaplain's room, and perhaps fatally injured, for so Rupert told him, he entreated Miss Valence to show him the way, and all three were standing at Don Ramiro's door as the physician arrived from Sepúlveda. They were forbidden to enter, and a dreary pause ensued till the medical examination was concluded. It left no hope. The injuries were internal, and of the most serious character; they could not be dealt with, and the utmost now to be expected was that the patient would lose consciousness ere the agony became unendurable. Not knowing in what relations those present stood to Ivor, the physician, a brief sententious speaker, uttered his verdict aloud, prescribed a few simple lenitives, and a gradually increasing dose of morphia which he had brought with him; and was proceeding to visit Lady May. The tall military-looking man who had insisted on being present at the examination, but did not utter a syllable throughout, rose when the doctor ended, and said to him in very pure Spanish, 'How long will my boy live? I am his father.' The doctor uttered an angry exclamation. 'Why did you not tell me, then? am I an executioner?' he cried. 'The young man may live seven or eight days. But it is uncertain,' and his voice dropped,—'the days may shrink to hours.' Colonel Valence sat down and took Ivor's hand again. It was resting on the coverlet, for he had now been transferred to the chaplain's bed.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FURIES APPEASED

THE case of Lady May proved less desperate. She had thrown herself into the deepest part of the lake, and would have been washed down by the current of the Guadalete—which was there running at a great speed—had not Ivor Mardol seized her as she rose the second time and carried her within a few yards of the shore. Thus she had escaped unhurt, while he, striking, as he last went down, on the sunken rocks, had received his deathblow. When the doctor came Lady May was sitting upright with her arms round her father's neck, weeping and imploring his forgiveness. She told him it was a sudden frenzy for which she could not account that tempted her to stand on the edge of the boat when it drifted. The name of Hippolyta she kept in her bosom, nor did she inquire for Rupert. The doctor at once insisted on her lying down. He prescribed rest for several days and light nourishment. 'Who brought me out?' she asked. The doctor did not know his name; and would not of course mention the dangerous state in which her preserver lay. Thus the evening closed in. None of the strangers returned to the Fonda d'Oro. Accommodation was found for them in the dismantled wing at San Lucar. But there was little sleep that night for any. Ivor, kept awake by intense pain, but scarcely conscious, refused to take the narcotic. He did not want to die yet; such was his constant cry. There was so much to be done. He must have time.

And by the mercy of Heaven time was given. The pain grew less towards morning. He slept without

morphia, and passed a comparatively easy day. In the afternoon he sent for Hippolyta, who, fatigued with the horrible scenes through which she had gone, had been ordered by the Mother Superior to take a few hours' rest in the morning. She no sooner came into the room than he held out his arms, 'My sister, my sister!' he cried in a feeble voice but with exceeding joy on his countenance. 'I am every one's sister,' she replied, smiling at the poor invalid. 'Are you in less pain now?' He laughed as she spoke. 'You are not every one's sister as you are mine,' he answered; and trying to turn towards Colonel Valence, but sinking down as he found the pain catching him, 'Tell her, father,' he went on with a gasp; 'she does not know. Why didn't you tell her yesterday?'

The Colonel had passed the night sleepless, like Hippolyta—he at the bedside of Ivor Mardol, she in a chair at some distance. But though he saw her move about him, and even called her by name, and kissed her on the cheek, he had spoken hardly at all; neither did he explain his words to the physician. And she, intent on so many things, could not realise their meaning. It was like a sudden flash, therefore, when her father, looking at the young man rather than at his long-lost Hippolyta, said calmly, 'This is your brother, my dear. He is the son of my first wife, Alice Davenant.' He drew her to him, and joined his children's hands.

There are meetings, recognitions, which refuse to be described. There is a joy in the depths of sadness greater than mortal can depict, though many have felt it. I shall not attempt to speak of the hours that succeeded, as, little by little, brother and sister came to understand that they were indeed what Colonel Valence told them. It was a feast for angels. In the melancholy convent, with an unhappy Rupert lying prostrate in his room, and Lady May coming back to the recollection of yesterday, with its poignant anguish and irremediable sin, nay, while the wings of death were hovering over them, Ivor and Hippolyta sat entranced, and knew that nothing could dim their joy. The new-found brother told, in feeble accents, and

pausing at the end of almost every sentence, the story of his birth, and the reasons that had moved a father who, albeit in a stern way, loved his children, to put a veil of mystery between himself and his only son. Ivor would not allow Colonel Valence to take the word out of his mouth; an excessive gladness, mingled with reverence for his father, impelled him to repeat the strange story, as one child may delight to tell another the fairy-tale it has heard. Hippolyta listened with a sadder feeling. She was not surprised; but she was grieved at the remembrance of those many years during which she had not known a brother's love. She looked at her father wonderingly. If it was a rebuke, he did not take notice of it. He had no thought for any one but Ivor. And he sat, in the bent attitude of fatigue or sorrow, while they talked in low tones at his side, Ivor resting as well as he could, and Hippolyta holding her brother's hand.

Three children, it appeared, were born of the marriage with Lady Alice. Two were daughters, who died while they were quite young in London, where their parents had for the most part resided during the ten or eleven years of their wedded life. Lady Alice, who had always been of a delicate constitution, never quite recovered from the trouble of her last two years at Trelingham. She was absolutely submissive to Colonel Valence; she did not speak of her brother, and would have accompanied her husband on his Spanish expeditions, had he not insisted that she should stay in London and watch over the children. Twice he returned, and twice he was called on to follow the beloved remains of a daughter to the grave. He was not a man to bend under the storms of fate; he bore up, and he suffered acutely. His old daring spirit was unchanged, but every year beheld the growth of a sadder and a more saturnine humour in Colonel Valence. To his wife he was a perfect husband; to his associates a proud, resolute, unhappy man. At last the stroke fell which cut his life in twain. Lady Alice gave birth to a son, and died the same day. With failing breath she implored her husband, whose darkening brow and fierce intensity of grief struck her in the midst of her agony, not to visit on the child his mother's

loss. And then she calmly passed away, having attained and enjoyed the one happiness on which she had set her heart. But the bereaved husband could not endure to look on Ivor. He turned his face when the nurse brought the poor wailing thing, and would have put it into his arms. Only Lady Alice's condition had kept him from returning to Spain, where the prospects of the democratic party were gloomy, and the presence of the bolder spirits was urgently needed. Long determined that no child of his should touch Lady Alice's fortune, or take a place in the succession to Trelingham, he saw that it was time to carry out a resolution which should endure into future years. Lord Trelingham was not yet married; his cousin, Mr. Davenant, who came next in the entail, was a middle-aged man about town, of easy fortune, and easier morals. He had not married, did not intend to marry, and viewed with the equanimity of selfishness the extinction which threatened both the elder and the younger lines of the ancient house to which he belonged. Colonel Valence had kept an eye on these things. It seemed by no means improbable that Lady Alice's surviving child would come into the Trelingham estate; and if he did so, and were a man of ability or character, he would not find it impossible to get the title of Trelingham revived in his favour. That must not be, said the Colonel, and he shaped his action accordingly.

He had long known and admired the stern integrity of Mr. Mardol. At one time their principles had been almost the same; and though they never met without discussing the question of 'physical force,' they remained on terms of friendship, and, I might say, of affection. At this juncture, then, Colonel Valence entrusted Ivor to the keeping of the old philosopher and his wife. He did not say whose child it was, or what motives made such a step necessary. Nor did they ask. Mr. Mardol consented on two conditions. One was that Ivor should be told, when capable of understanding it, that he was not their child; the other, that he should be educated strictly on the lines of the humanitarian philosophy. We have seen that both were fulfilled. Colonel Valence believed that a little knowledge of life

would lead his son to sufficiently stern principles, and he trusted no one like Mr. Mardol.

He went abroad, and was absent from England many years. During the interval Lord Trelingham had married, but the only issue was a daughter, Lady May. Mr. Davenant, too, had been caught by a clever woman, and surrendered his bachelor independence. He had one son, a child of two years old. Thus the danger of the succession seemed to have been averted from Ivor. But Lady Alice's fortune still awaited him, and there was no security that he would not, on Colonel Valence's decease, be taken up by his mother's people, and lost to the cause of democracy. The Colonel, therefore, persisted in his old plan of bringing up Ivor Valence as Ivor Mardol, and training him to the habits of life and thought which befitted an engraver's son. He could now bear to look on the boy; he loved him after a silent fashion of his own. But he was resolved, cost what it might, to keep the vow he had spoken in the picture-gallery at Trelingham Court. No child of his should touch any part of that inheritance, great or small. He might have acknowledged Ivor at an earlier date, if the young man had not shown such tenacity in adhering to the peaceful principles of Mr. Mardol. But while he did so, the mystery continued. Rather than endanger it, Colonel Valence, on learning the presence of Ivor's friend, the artist, at Trelingham, had at once quitted Falside; and he stayed away as long as Ivor dwelt in the Hermitage. From Hippolyta he kept the secret as carefully as from all the world. He allowed himself the pleasure of making her copy his epistles to her brother in a cypher of which she had not the key; and to the same motive we must attribute the commission he gave her, which led to her visiting the chalet, and making the acquaintance of Rupert Glanville. All this Ivor could not know, or repeat if he had known. But he told Hippolyta of his early dreams, his longing for home and a sister's affection, his grief lest she should have gone astray on leaving Rupert, his estrangement from Colonel Valence after the meeting in Denzil Lane. 'And you,' he said, the smile coming into his eyes,—'it was you that ended it; you that brought father and me together. When you wrote to

the Duke of Adullam,—oh, I know him, he has been a kind friend to me,—and said what you had done, and that you desired to see your father before leaving this house, the Duke sent for me. He was aware that a difference had arisen between me and Mr. Felton, as I called him. It does not matter now. By and by I will come back to that, when I am dying,'—his smile was ineffable,—'but, you know, the Duke thought it was time I should learn everything. Do you remember meeting him?'

'Once, years ago, when I was quite a child; but he took no notice of me.'

'He was acquainted with your history, nevertheless, and had been told more of it by Rupert than I knew. And he went over it all from the beginning. He sent me the same evening to Paris, to Mr. Felton. And I found him, and how surprised he was, and glad too, when he saw that the secret had come out! He did not wish me to be a Davenant or to be tempted by the glories of Trelingham. That was why he had denied himself, and, in a manner, disowned me, poor boy! As if I cared for Trelingham!'

He was obliged to stop. The pain returned; but he still kept the vivacious happy look that lightened his plain features and made them beautiful. The Colonel had heard every word, smiling a little, a very little, but not interrupting. His eyes now met Hippolyta's. She went over to him and kissed him. 'Father,' she said, 'why did you keep such a pleasant thing from me as the knowledge that I had a brother all those years? Had I known it I should have been saved. But do not trouble now. The lost can be saved as well as those that never went astray. I am not miserable; oh no, I wish others were as happy.' Her thoughts turned to Rupert and Lady May, and she ended with a sigh. Then, recovering herself, she persuaded her brother to take some of the morphia prescribed. It soothed the pain; it did not make him sleep. He would have continued talking, but she put her finger on her lip, and sat near him, and they were again in the sweet heaven where all that we love is restored. He turned his head on the pillow, and looking at her, said, 'I do not think I shall die to-night. But watch, and if I seem to be losing conscious-

ness, tell me, and send for the others. I should like to see Rupert. He was in the room last night when I could not speak. Is——?' he stopped.

'Dear,' she said, 'you must not hurt yourself. When the good God wills, He will take you. I know you are not afraid. That is right. We shall not be lost to one another.'

'Oh, I am not afraid,' was the simple answer; 'I believe in God. My God is light and goodness. How should I fear? But,' he went on, making an effort, 'I wanted to ask —something. Is May—is Rupert's wife with him?'

Hippolyta looked at him in complete surprise. Did he not know whom he had rescued? She was afraid to reply. How to question him without giving him a shock? It was a most unexpected difficulty.

'You are a long while answering, sister?' he said, smiling. He liked to call her sister. She must speak.

'Would it hurt you to talk about yesterday?' she began.

'In what way?' he inquired.

'About — about the accident,' she said hesitatingly. 'I know you and father were the two visitors that arrived. But how came you to be on the terrace?'

'Simply enough. You were a long time coming, father was impatient to see you, and so was I, you may be sure. And our combined impatience made sitting in a bare room impossible. We went out and walked up and down. Then I saw some one in a boat, a woman, rowing across the lake, and she stopped all at once, put down the oars, stood up, —she gave a wild scream which seemed to go up into the sky, and the next minute she was in the water. I ran down as fast as I could and jumped in. I remember nothing else except the weight round my neck as I sank.'

'But you rescued her; you saved her life,' said Hippolyta. His eyes were very pleasant to see. 'And don't you know who it was?' she went on, with a meaning look which he somehow failed to make out.

'No; how should I?' He caught the look now, stopped, grasped Hippolyta's hand tighter, and said, with a most innocent confusion, blushing like a girl, 'No, don't tell me it was——'

'It was Lady May,' she whispered gently.

'Ah, God be praised,' he said. 'And I shall die! I rescued her and I shall die! I could not return to the common life after such a thing. Why, it is better than dying in battle, which is but putting your life against another's. Oh, how good God is! Did I not tell you, Hippolyta, that He is light and goodness.'

'Hush,' said his sister, pointing to Colonel Valence. Her heart was torn at the expectation of so near a calamity, but she dreaded even more for her father than herself. She knew what ardent passions were concealed under that imperturbable appearance of calm. It was lava beneath snow, and in a moment the surface might melt. But Colonel Valence, who sat a silent listener while Ivor gloried in death, now broke in upon their dangerous conversation. 'I did not know it was Lord Trelingham's daughter,' he said, 'and I could wish it had been some one else. Must you be sacrificed for the house of Davenant, alive and dead?' he asked bitterly. 'But for them, you would have always had a father, and I should not be losing a son.' He controlled himself with a strong effort. 'Never mind me, Ivor,' he said; 'I talk at random. Do not look so excited. The danger is great, but we must, we will hope.'

'What should I hope for, except to die?' said he; 'but I will not be excited. I will try to sleep; and to-morrow you are to send for them all.' His head fell on the pillow and he slept, breathing heavily at times and starting with pain, but with an expression of the most perfect happiness on lips and brow. Hippolyta watched him, her own lips moving occasionally in prayer. She thought of Electra in the touching story, who did the like office for a stricken brother. 'But here are no Furies,' she said.

For him there could be none. Was it so as regarded Rupert and the other poor thing, who had nearly cast away her life and had sacrificed Ivor's? The next morning brought Hippolyta a task which she would have deemed the most malignant stroke of destiny had she not learned, like her brother, to believe in God. As she came from the early mass, celebrated where San Lucar's shrine had formerly stood, Tom Davenant, waiting in the cloister bare-

headed, besought a moment's audience. She had conventual duties to perform, but his speech was urgent, and she had leave to hear him. Taking her out on the terrace, he said abruptly, 'Miss Valence, I am not in the secret of Thursday's accident, and I do not know who is. But things are in a deplorable way between my cousin and her husband. Mr. Glanville, after spending many hours in his room, sent a message last night requesting permission to see Lady May. That was extraordinary enough from a husband to his wife. But, more extraordinary still, May refused to see him. The message was repeated, and a more peremptory denial returned. This morning, not an hour ago, my cousin rose, in spite of the doctor's orders, dressed herself, and insisted on the Earl's taking her back to the Fonda. Lord Trelingham could not but consent, and they at once went over in the very boat from which she fell into the stream. But that is not all. Before going she said in my presence that she had done with Mr. Glanville for ever, and looked upon herself as divorced. What, in Heaven's name, is it all about, and what are we to do? I cannot take such a message as that to Rupert.'

This was the longest speech Tom had made in his life. To Hippolyta its import was overwhelming. She lost all sense of her situation. It was the suicide over again; her own sin avenged on Rupert by Lady May. She stared at Tom Davenant without replying. 'I see you are as perplexed as myself,' said the kind-hearted young man; 'but you are the only person I can speak to. In these things one woman can influence another, and we men are no use. Go to Lady May, ask her to confide in you. And—I once thought you could persuade Mr. Glanville more easily than most. Try to get matters clear between them. It will kill her father.'

'Do nothing,' said Hippolyta, 'till I come back. Where is Mr. Glanville?' and she drew herself together as for a violent effort.

'He is in his room,' said Tom; 'let me show you the way.' He led her along the passages, up several flights of stairs, and into the disused wing. 'It is there,' he said, and made his way back to the terrace, leaving her tremulous

and undecided before the door. She knocked. Rupert's voice said 'Come in,' and she entered.

He was sitting at a table, his head bent down, a picture of fatigue and misery. Since the accident, though he had eaten what was set before him, he seemed to have neither slept nor washed. He was haggard and forlorn,—a contrast indeed to the brilliant Rupert Glanville for whom nothing could be too refined, and no living too delicate. Hippolyta looked at him with unspeakable pity. He started on seeing her. 'What!' he cried, 'has May sent you to tell me our marriage is broken? It would be a rare piece of wit,' and he laughed. The sound was like a knife driven into her side.

'For God's sake, Rupert,' she exclaimed, 'do not give way to the tempter. Pity me. Pity yourself.'

'I do,' he said grimly. 'Look, Hippolyta. Last night, after thinking till my head was ready to burst, I resolved that I would be a man, as you said,—I should be pleasing you, at any rate,—and I sent to that wife of mine, to the —the suicide, you know, saying I wanted to see her. I meant to beg her pardon, make peace, and leave you. That was fair, I suppose?'

She could not understand that Rupert, Rupert Glanville, was saying such things. Whither had the man vanished to whom she once gave herself? This was not he. 'Yes, it was fair,' she said, trembling.

He laughed again, and struck his hand on the table. 'Ay, one would have thought so,' he cried, 'but not she. She sent me back a dog's message, take it or leave it, all the same to her. She said no, I might go where I pleased, but I should not be in the room where Lady May Davenant found herself. I was humble; I sent again. Her answer was contempt. Have I done enough? If you like we will go away together. But you have changed too. You were the first to change. The woman's fashion, not the man's. Ivor is worth a thousand of you. And he must die because of Lady May Davenant. Well, I can follow him.'

'Rupert,' she said once more, in the gentlest tones she had ever used towards him, 'look at me.' The subdued tenderness effected more than a torrent of eloquence would

have done. He stopped in the midst of his wild words and fixed his eyes on Hippolyta's grief-stained face. 'You are suffering,' he said more quietly.

She put her hand to her heart. 'Were it not for resolution,' she said, 'I should be dying. Do you believe that a woman can give up all that I have given up and not feel it? I might rave, like you, if I thought only of myself. It is my fault,—mine, I confess it before God and man. These deaths, these suicides, these divisions of heart from heart, I did it all, unclean as I am. But help me, Rupert, to make amends. Ivor, my brother Ivor, must die. Be it so. I surrender him to God. He is innocent. He can afford to die. But you must live. Lady May shall not lose her soul for me. Help me, help me to set these things right. Be patient, it is all I ask. And when Lady May relents, accept her affection. If you do not, Rupert,' she continued sorrowfully, 'my punishment will be greater than I can bear. It will kill me. Have you no compassion for Hippolyta?'

She could speak no more. But Rupert was coming to himself, and he began to see the character of the woman who, if she had sinned, was nobly repentant, in the divine light which shone round it. Rising from his seat with a sudden motion, and passing his hand over his forehead as though to brush away the illusions which had clouded his fancy, he said, taking her hand,—nor did she refuse it,—'Count on me in life and death. You have brought the true Rupert Glanville from the tomb. I will wait for you.'

'No; come with me,' she said. And they went down to the river side.

Several boats were lying there, into one of which Hippolyta entered, signing to Rupert that he should take the oars. He did so, not reluctantly, for he had now determined that he would obey, at all costs, whatever directions she should give. But a great wonder came upon him when she bade him row towards the Fonda d'Oro. He was not aware of Lady May's departure. Tom Davenant, standing at an upper window, saw them push off from shore; but, mindful of Hippolyta's command, made no attempt to follow them. Rupert, pulling [illegible]

thought of the one occasion, and one only, on which he had conveyed Hippolyta over a broad sheet of water like this, after their first meeting in the Hermitage. They had been as voiceless and recollected then, her eyes directed towards the bank, and eager to gain it. When they touched land, at the side of the hotel, he thought it was time to ask the reason of their crossing; but she did not reply. She left him to fasten the boat; put a question to the hotel-keeper who had come forth to welcome them, and, on hearing his answer, motioned Rupert to enter the house, which he did in the same state of amazement as before. She pushed a door open. It was the dining-room. 'Stay here,' she said, 'and, above all, keep perfectly quiet until I send to you.'

'Will it be long?' he inquired.

She shook her head. 'I cannot say,' was her answer; 'but wait.' She went noiselessly upstairs.

Again she was venturing a hazardous experiment. She tapped at Lady May's door. There seemed to be no answer, but without hesitation she opened and went in. The woman she sought was lying on the coarse sofa which the place afforded as a couch, half-asleep, and sprang up at her entrance. When she saw Colonel Valence's daughter, she pointed imperiously to the door. 'How came you in, Miss Valence?' she said in her haughtiest tones; 'you are intruding. Have the goodness to leave me.'

'When I have done what I came for,' answered her visitor firmly, taking no offence at the rudeness of her reception.

'And pray what is that? The sooner you explain, the sooner will your visit be over.'

Hippolyta coloured. 'You are very cruel,' she said; 'what have I done to you? I never wronged you.'

'What, never wronged me!' exclaimed Lady May. 'You take my husband's love, you drive me to death, and —it is no wrong! You desolate a home, you come to gloat over the work of your hands, but still you do not wrong me! I wrong myself to talk with Mr. Glanville's discarded concubine. Go to him. He may take you back again. It will save you from the streets, which would

be your other alternative. But leave me. Your presence is an insult.'

Shame burnt in her victim's face, crimson, hectic. Hot tears rained from her eyes, and the heart of Hippolyta seemed almost broken as she sobbed aloud. Rupert's step made itself audible in the room below. He could not help fancying that a quarrel was going on somewhere in the house, though he knew not where; and it made him uneasy. He began to walk up and down. At the sound Hippolyta stilled her weeping. She was afraid he would come up. It was no time to think of herself. But she understood the character of Lady May, and she replied deliberately, 'If I were a thousand times what you call me, and what I am, you would still be in the wrong, and not I. Was it your husband that I loved or followed? Did Rupert Glanville love you first? And when I had once forsaken him, did I, by word or token, acquaint him with my existence till the day he came upon me in the church of San Lucar? I have sinned against all women, but not against you, Lady May. I ask pardon of the womanhood I have stained and shamed, but not of you. When I feared you were dying, I asked your forgiveness; the disaster, though not my fault, was yet by my occasion. Now you are saved; my brother has given his life for yours, and you owe me thanks, not pardon.'

'Your brother! I did not know you had one,' said Lady May, feeling unexpectedly weak where she had thought to be irresistible. It is the way with these proud natures. They must be attacked in front if you would conquer them. May Davenant was accustomed to follow her own will, to think every one weak compared with herself, and to take their compliance for granted. Even Rupert, since their marriage, had been as yielding as the rest.

But Hippolyta had not studied her rival in vain. She knew that she must strike hard. And she went on, 'Yes, my brother, and your cousin,—Ivor Mardol, as he is called, —but he is the son of Lady Alice, with the blood of Davenant in his veins. He is dying, a[illegible] What will you do for him? Will you [illegible] unjust?'

'But what can I do?' replied May, with a strange feeling of perplexity, sitting down on the sofa from which she had risen. There was a soft expression in Hippolyta's looks which troubled her. 'What can I do?' she repeated.

'You can make your husband happy,' said Ivor's sister; 'dear Lady May, try to understand. You have a noble heart; you have not wronged me or any one. It is only that you think I stand between you and Rupert. But I do not. I have given him up,' her voice trembled, sank, and grew firm again, as she continued, 'Is it not three years since I left him? A few weeks hence and I shall be sailing for India. What can prevent you from being happy as before. Ivor asks it. I ask it. See, I kneel to you.'

She was there, kneeling on the ground, an image of humble supplication. May did not know what to say or think. Was this the woman she had insulted? She was overcome; she had no argument left. Putting her arms round Hippolyta, with a burst of weeping, she whispered faintly, as she bent down her face to the other, 'But he will always love you.'

'No, no,' answered the noble creature, making a supreme act of self-renunciation; 'it is over, and the Hippolyta Valence he cared for is dead and buried. When you leave this place, it will be like a dream. I shall die in the East; that is in my vow.'

She rose, but continued longer in the same strain, pleading as if for her own soul. The scales fell from May Davenant's eyes; and in the moment that she was humbled she saw light. 'We have both sinned,' she said at last, 'but my sin was the greater. Advise me what to do. Shall I send for Rupert? Perhaps he will not come. Are there any words that will bring him, after the message I sent last night?'

'He is here,' replied Hippolyta in a soft whisper.

Lady May flushed with delight. 'Oh, tell him to come,' she cried.

'Nay,' said Hippolyta, smiling mournfully, 'it is the wife's duty to [illegible] the husband. He is lord and master. Come, he is [illegible] stairs.' She took Lady May by the hand. They descended the stairs with beating hearts, united, yet

how different from one another! When they reached the door of the dining-room, Hippolyta opened it, and pushing Lady May gently forward, said, 'Go in, and speak as your heart bids you.'

She saw the door close, and grasping her crucifix tightly, went down to the boat. Lady May, on entering and seeing Rupert, threw herself into his arms. They held one another fast for a long while without speaking. It seemed as if a cloud had melted and left them face to face and soul to soul. As they stood in that silent embrace, the sound of plashing oars broke upon them. They looked out, still holding one another, and beheld the veiled figure in the boat, which one of the hotel servants was rowing to San Lucar. Hippolyta's face was turned from them and her head bent. The great solemn light seemed to move with her. It was almost noon.

'She is an angel,' said Rupert devoutly. And he told how she had come to him and brought him to the Fonda d'Oro.

'She has saved me as well as you,' answered Lady May. 'Is she not the noblest woman on earth?'

'She is in heaven,' he murmured. And his wife understood now what was meant by the feeling that transcended love, of which she had dreamt long ago in the picture-gallery at Trelingham. The love was her own. The something higher had been given to Hippolyta.

They spent the evening in quiet, restored to one another. Lord Trelingham, exhausted by all he had gone through, and unable to comprehend his daughter's abrupt changes of disposition, looked on, mildly thankful that husband and wife were again as he had seen them before coming to San Lucar. Late at night Tom Davenant came in. He had been informed of the reconciliation by Hippolyta, learning at the same time, to his great amaze, the relation in which they all stood to Ivor. He begged earnestly for admittance to his friend's presence. He could not be refused; and the meeting was another draught of happiness to the agonised patient, whose suffering increased from hour to hour, but whose joy could [illegible] diminished. Tom sat by him till the clock struck [illegible]

thought himself of the party at the Fonda d'Oro, who would be waiting for intelligence from the sick chamber; and he rowed across in the moonlight. By that time Lord Trelingham had learnt nearly all that they could tell him of Ivor's life and parentage. It was an utter surprise, but an equal pleasure. He was ready to love the young man, for whom he had conceived a high esteem at Trelingham; and his daughter's preserver could not be too near or too dear to him. The news which Tom brought of his sufferings threw a gloom over their lately-restored happiness. He left them, for he would not stay from Ivor a moment more than he could help. Lady May began to dread the Nemesis of her ill deeds which seemed to threaten; her nerves were shattered by continual emotion; she passed a feverish night, and could not rise next morning.

It was Sunday. A cloudless tranquil sky overhead, the water rippling on the lake, the church bells sounding from Sepúlveda and San Lucar, the gardens and the cornfields rejoicing together, made a world in which sorrow might seem to have no place. Rupert tended Lady May with the exceeding gentleness he knew how to use; Lord Trelingham came and went, said little, but was happy. Several times they cast anxious glances towards the convent. What was going on within its walls? But the afternoon passed, and they had no tidings. Was their friend better? Why did not Tom Davenant come? Rupert and May knew well, though they could not whisper it, that Hippolyta would come no more.

As the lovely sunset was flushing the waters and irradiating height and hollow, they saw a boat traversing the stream. When it touched, a messenger sprang out and ran up to them where they sat in the verandah. They must come at once. Ivor Mardol was dying.

CHAPTER XXXVII

NOT DEATH BUT LOVE

HE looked up as they entered, knew them, and smiled, but could not speak. For many hours the pain had been intense; and though drenched with narcotics, he lay wide awake and conscious. Now he was lying supported with pillows on the low bed, his head resting in Colonel Valence's arms. It gave him a little relief to stay in this position. His father neither moved nor spoke, though on seeing Lord Trelingham a mist came over his eyes, and his lips quivered. Hippolyta, who was seated on the other side of the bed, came round and took the Earl's hand; she seemed not to observe the two that accompanied him. But when Lady May took the hand that was disengaged and pressed it warmly, she smiled without raising her eyes. Tom Davenant stood at the foot of the bed. He had a tired expression, not having slept the previous night and being more affected than he was aware at the sight of Ivor's sufferings. The chaplain, Don Ramiro, was likewise in the room, but they scarcely observed his presence, and he did not come forward.

'Give me something to drink,' said Ivor, 'not a sleeping-draught.' Hippolyta moistened his lips. 'Now let me sit up,' he went on, clenching his fingers like a man who is intent on some difficult task. The pillows were rearranged. It was slow work, for the least movement caused him exquisite agony. 'I wish I had more time,' he said, and he smiled a little, fixing his gaze, which was bright and clear, on Colonel Valence. 'Father,' he continued, 'will you not tell them who I am? Do they all know?'

'Too late, too late,' said his father; and then, turning to the Earl, 'Davenant, this is Alice's child. You know. He is the last, the youngest. His two sisters died when they were children, before he was born. Alice,—she is dead too. They are all gone, and Ivor did not know I was his father. I would never tell him. I did not want him to be a Davenant, to go back to his mother's people and their ways. But all is at an end.'

Lord Trelingham put forth a trembling hand. 'Can we be friends, Valence?' he said; 'it is forty-four years since we met. And Alice would wish us to forgive one another, for her child's sake.'

Colonel Valence touched the hand held out to him. 'Forty-four years!' he repeated, 'and Alice died when Ivor was born. He is not thirty-four. It is young to die, isn't it, my boy?' turning to his son.

'But I have lived,' was the contented answer. 'And I have all that I love around me. What more do I want?—Ah, there is one thing.' A shade of sadness came over his countenance.

'What is it?' said Colonel Valence, stooping to kiss him. 'I will do it. Only speak.'

The dying eyes, still bright, glanced towards Rupert. 'Do you remember,' said Ivor, trying not to seem over-agitated, 'the night you and I met my father in Denzil Lane?'

Rupert looked at him in surprise. 'Yes, Ivor,' he said; 'what of it?'

'I want father—to promise me—to be on my side, not on the other.' The words were slow in coming. Colonel Valence was silent. 'Promise me,' pleaded his son; 'I shall not die happy unless you promise.' The others, except Rupert, thought he was wandering.

'Ivor,' said the old man, with an evident struggle to keep down his feelings, 'do you want me to renounce the Revolution?'

'Oh no, it is not the Revolution I want you to renounce,' answered his son; 'only the counterfeit—the violence, the shedding blood for blood.' His voice failed him. Again Hippolyta moistened his lips; she stroked his cheek and

smiled at him. The caress seemed to give him courage. 'You know, father,' he said, his strength returning as it sometimes will at the last, and his accents growing clear, 'when I was a boy you gave me to Mr. Mardol; and he taught me to have a feeling for every one, high as well as low. He believed in the victory of right—and you did once.'

'It was when Alice lived,' murmured his father, 'not after I lost her. Forty years ago—when I was younger than you—I believed that all would come right; that the world was made right. But my life is a ruin.'

'No, no,' cried Ivor; 'the old creed was the true one, when you believed in life and love. See, father, here is love. There will be life too. These are shadows. Somewhere there is the reality. Have I not overcome death?' His face glowed, and he saw Lady May looking at him. 'Stand on my side, father. Trust in the good that comes out of suffering, of martyrdom, if you will. But do not deny the hope in which you had me brought up; do not harden your heart. It was always loving, I know. Hippolyta knows.'

'Listen to Ivor, father,' she said tremulously.

He looked long at them both. 'I will,' he said, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

'Now let me die,' said Ivor, sinking back. 'I did not think death could be so sweet. Rupert, good-bye. Tom, my dear fellow, Rupert will be your friend instead of me. I was very fond of you. And Lady May——' She was weeping silently. He closed his eyes and lay still. They waited for the coming of death, voiceless, recollected, as when a great storm is gathering in the distance. Not a leaf stirred at the window; the sunset light was streaming in. But there remained something else. He called Rupert faintly. 'When you go home,' he said, 'search in my desk. You will find'—how slowly the words drop from dying lips!—'find pages I have written—a diary. There is a secret in them. Read, but do not tell any one.' Rupert whispered assent. Another pause. 'May was my cousin,' his voice murmured more faintly, and a smile lit up [illegible] darkling eyes. 'May—Hippolyta—remember [illegible]

voice failed altogether. He was gone. A great calm lay on the dead face.

. . . . . .

They buried him outside the convent walls, in a sheltered nook by the stream. It was unconsecrated ground, and there was no burial service. 'Was your brother a Christian?' inquired Don Ramiro, when Hippolyta told him a little of their story, and asked what should be done. 'He was never baptized,' she said. 'Then he cannot lie in consecrated soil,' replied the priest. 'Never mind,' she said absently. He thought she was grieving over it, and he added with the kindness which was a part of him—for he was a feeling man—'But you need not distress yourself so much; all the land is consecrated; wherever he lies will be holy ground; it is *la tierra de Maria Santisima*, this Andalusia of ours.' She smiled and said nothing. She had no trouble on that account.

Another grave may be seen near Ivor's, which was dug only a few weeks after he had been laid to rest. It is that of Lord Trelingham. The shock of that terrible moment when he beheld his daughter flinging herself into the lake, proved more than his enfeebled frame could bear. One morning when he was called he did not answer. They entered his room; he was dead. The heart had stopped beating many hours, and his limbs were cold.

On the day of the funeral, when the clergyman summoned from Seville had read over the Earl of Trelingham that solemn service, musical and heart-subduing, which the Liturgy of the English Church has consecrated to the dead, Hippolyta sent for May and Rupert. They came in their deep mourning, which vied in colour with the religious habit she wore. Standing in the guest-room she said to them, 'You are leaving San Lucar, and I am setting out for India. We shall never meet again, until they come back to us'—she pointed towards the sheltered nook where the nightingales were singing, and the scattered rays of sunlight making their way in among the leaves. 'Never again,' she said. 'I have only one thing to ask. Rupert, you remember Annie Dauris.' He assented silently, and she continued, 'Annie Dauris was taken, and I am left; but God's mercies are

infinite. What I had to say was this. Take care of her father and the children when you go home. Their mother died while I was at the convent. For my sake be good to Willie and Charlie; they are loving boys. Charlie has a talent for drawing. Let him be with you in the studio. That is all.' She held out her hands to both of them, gave them one last look of farewell, and went out of the room.

. . . . . .

The new Earl of Trelingham does not live at the Court. It is shown to visitors, and the frescoes of the Great Hall have won universal admiration, and will hand down the artist's name to a late posterity. But since their return to England Tom Davenant is much with Rupert and his cousin. I fancy he will sooner or later accept the devotion of the Countess Lutenieff, and that Karina's one sincere and enduring affection will meet with its reward.

Lady May is an artist's wife, and seems to have forgotten that she was once an Earl's daughter. She is happy. Rupert's genius, chastened and glorified, promises to achieve greater things than ever; but he has deep thoughts which he does not share with any one.

Colonel Valence, reconciled to Lord Trelingham, returned after his death to Falside, and lives there a lonely man, but not altogether unhappy. He spends many hours near Lady Alice's tomb in the gray old churchyard by the sea, and they bring him strange thoughts. Faith? Ah no, he does not believe yet in divine realities, but in his ears the Percy motto, *Espérance*, seems often ringing. Hippolyta writes to him from the Far East, where she is fulfilling her vow.

Looking in at Rupert's studio one afternoon, the Duke of Adullam found him absorbed in Ivor's diary, with the picture of Hippolyta lying before him. Charlie Dauris, seated at the farther end of the room, was drawing and did not look up or attend to the conversation which ensued. The Duke recognised Ivor's handwriting. He asked about the portrait, and Rupert, who remembered the familiar interchange of thought which had passed between them on a certain evening, told him how both portrait and diary had been discovered in a desk at Grafton Place. "Ah, I am

the Duke, with a peculiar expression of countenance, 'it is a pitiable story. You have lost the noblest friend, the most enchanting mistress, that ever a man had. Will you not join us now? You know what I mean; the doors of the smoking-room are open. A more melancholy experience than yours it is impossible to conceive.'

Rupert smiled gravely and shook his head. 'There is no sadness in the story,' he replied, 'as you imagine. It is something higher and better than sadness. I seem to apprehend its meaning,—not all, but so much that it leaves the stars shining in heaven. May and I never speak of Ivor or Hippolyta, but their memory is to us a religion. How should we have known true affection but for them? Till that day at San Lucar she cared for me in the passionate way that brings neither happiness nor calm. And I hardly cared for her at all; my love had on it the shadow of a felt bereavement, and was faint, phantasmal rather than a living thing. Now the stars look down out of their serene heaven, the flowers bloom at our feet. Call on Lady May, and watch the delight she has in our first c[illegible] See,' he went on, pointing across the studio, 'there is the boy's portrait, with his mother's eyes and smile.'

It was a lovely sketch, the cherub in the dawn of existence, glowing with infantine joy; fair-haired, dark-eyed, rosy. He seemed to look out on the future as if it were a sunlit prospect, with hope and laughter on his murmuring lips.

'Ah!' said the Duke, while he fixed his searching gaze on the picture; 'you are right. Do not come to us. Your spirit has deepened, it has been touched to the finest issues. I see that the memory of the past, the fire you have both come through, has made for you a new life and a true marriage. Your Hippolyta, your Ivor, have saved you from losing the one thing that men like my friends—that I—have lost for ever. But that one thing, I suspect, is the secret of existence, let the world change as it will.'

'And what is it?' inquired the artist.

'Can you doubt?' said the Duke of Adullam, his proud trembling a little and a slight blush overspreading his

features; 'you that find it in the stars of heaven and the flowers that spring up from the earth? What can it be, but love?'

A tender light came into Rupert's eyes. The sound of a carriage was heard outside, and voices at the door.

'Who is it?' said the Duke.

It was Lady May, leading her child by the hand. They had come to pay a visit to his father's studio.

THE END

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